

Fit for work despite danger of death

? whatdotheyknow.com/request/fit_for_work_despite_danger_of_d

16/11/2016

Dear Department for Work and Pensions,

Please would you kindly provide if it exists the number of ESA claimants in either the WRAG or Support group that the DWP has found fit to work in 2016 despite having in its possession at that point a letter from the claimant's doctor or consultant or psychiatrist or psychologist, etc that returning to work may put the claimant's life at risk.

Yours faithfully,

Lee Jefferson

1 Attachment Click to read DWP response confirming it holds this data

Dear Lee Jefferson,

Please find attached response to your Freedom Of Information request.

Regards

DWP Communications Team

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Lee Jefferson 8 December 2016

Dear DWP Business Intelligence PQ and FOI Central Team,

Thank you for indicating in your response confirming you have cases in 2016 where the DWP has found claimants fit to work despite having in its possession a letter from the claimant's doctor or consultant or psychiatrist or psychologist, etc that returning to work may put the claimant's life at risk.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Jefferson





Department
for Work &
Pensions

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Our Ref: 4355

DATE: 08 December 2016

Dear Lee Jefferson,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 16 November 2016. You asked for:-

Please would you kindly provide if it exists the number of ESA claimants in either the WRAG or Support group that the DWP has found fit to work in 2016 despite having in its possession at that point a letter from the claimant's doctor or consultant or psychiatrist or psychologist, etc that returning to work may put the claimant's life at risk.

DWP Response

We can confirm that the Department does hold some information falling within the description specified in your request. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing your request further.

Under section 16 of the FOIA we are obliged to assist you in providing options to narrow your request, by reforming or refocusing it, so that it will fall beneath the cost limit. In this instance the department could provide data on the claimants in the WRAG or Support Group and we can also provide data on fit for work decisions (see link below) however we would not be able to link these two elements together.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?keywords=Work+Capability+Assessment+Outcomes&publication_filter_option=all&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=department-for-work-pensions&official_document_status=all&world_locations%5B%5D=all&from_date=&to_date=&commit=Refresh+results

The Department would not be able to provide any data on any further evidence held that states that returning to work may put the claimant's life at risk.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central Fol Team, 5th Floor The Adelphi, 1-11, John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF www.ico.gov.uk

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ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessment policies and statements

From:

Department for Work and Pensions

First published:

25 March 2014

Last updated:

8 December 2016, [see all updates](#)

Part of:

[Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments](#)

Policies and statements related to the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA): outcomes of Work Capability Assessment statistics.

Documents



[Methodology and quality statement: ESA outcomes of Work Capability Assessment](#)

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Detail

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DWP complies with the [UK Statistics Authority code of practice for official statistics](#).

There is more about our statistics on the [Statistics at DWP](#) page.

Published:

25 March 2014

Updated:

8 December 2016
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Statistical Notice

**Methodology and Quality
Statement for the Department for
Work and Pensions Statistical
Release:**

Employment and Support Allowance:

Work Capability Assessments, Mandatory
Reconsiderations and Appeals

December 2016

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1. Overview of the Statistics

The main purpose of this document is to provide users with information about all the methods and quality assurance steps used to produce the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA): Work Capability Assessments (WCA), Mandatory Reconsiderations (MR) and Appeals statistical release in accordance with practices set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publishes the above statistical release every quarter, usually in March, June, September and December of each year.

The release is used to present information on both new ESA claims and Incapacity benefit claims undergoing reassessment (IBR) for ESA within Great Britain. It provides statistics on the outcome of completed ESA health assessments, ESA claims still in progress and ESA claims closed before the health assessment process is complete, as well as statistics on appeals outcomes.

Since June 2016, it also includes statistics on MR registrations and outcomes.

From September 2016, median MR clearance times were published as well as experimental cohort information which allows us to look at the overall ESA claimant journey through ESA WCA, MR and appeal stages.

The statistics can be viewed via this [link](#). The statistical release provides a high level overview and more detailed figures can be found in the accompanying excel tables.

2. Source Data

The statistical release uses data from the following four main administrative data sources:-

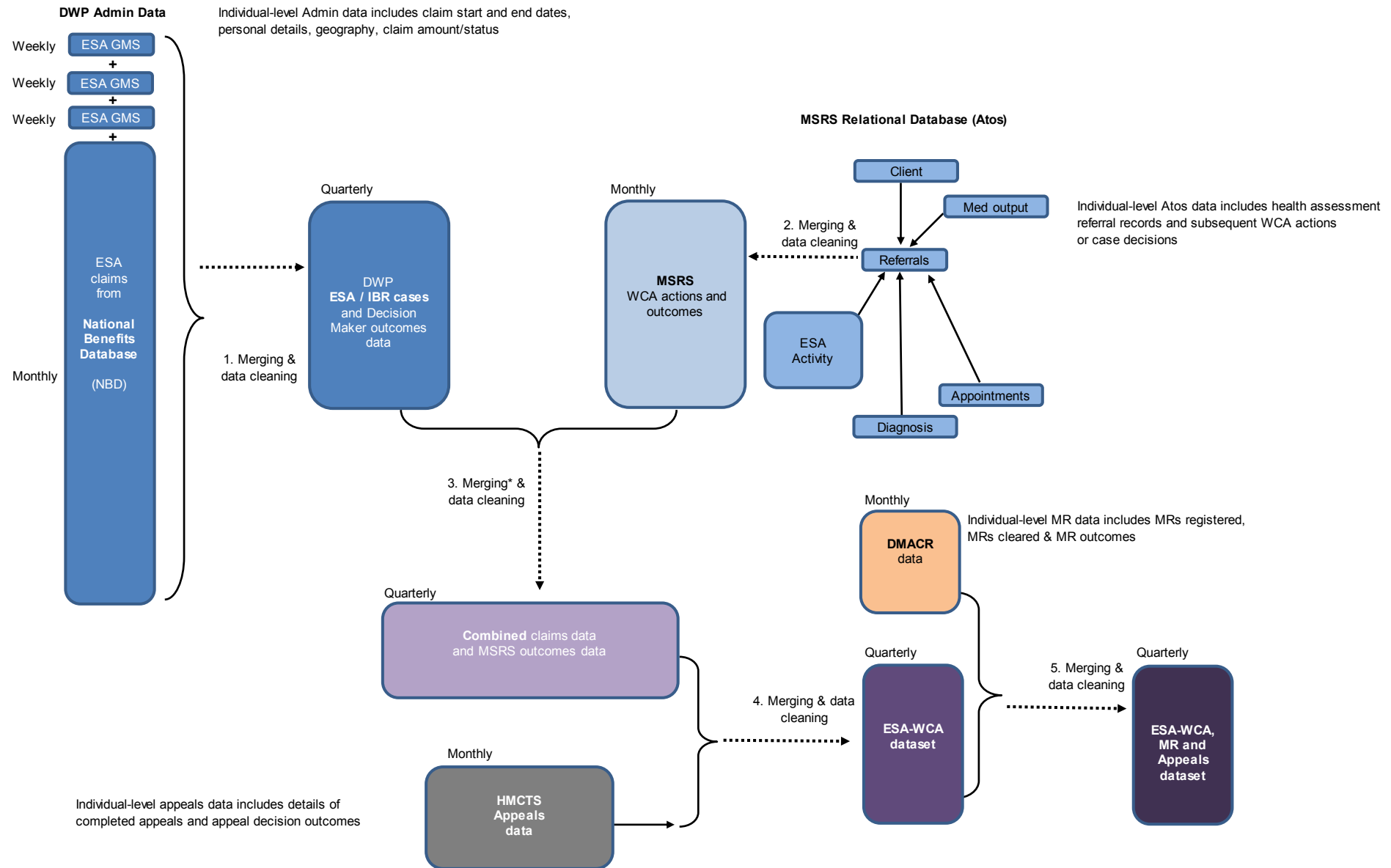
- **DWP's benefit data** covering new ESA claims (starting from 27th October 2008). These snapshot datasets are fed into the National Benefits Database (NBD) which holds claim level information on what benefits a person has claimed past and present. The NBD contains benefit information on Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disability Allowance (SDA), and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and is used as the base data to merge with health assessment data (MSRS), which contains WCA information from the Assessment provider, and Appeals data from Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS).

- **Health Assessment data** (MSRS data) from the Health Assessment Provider including information on face to face assessment, medical report form data (via ESA85) and limited capability for work questionnaire data (via ESA50) – this covers those cases where the assessment phase is completed;
- **Mandatory Reconsideration data** from the DWP administrative system named “Decision Maker and Case Recorder” (DMACR) which provides individual level data for MRs. The term ‘Mandatory Reconsideration’ refers to the process where a claimant approaches DWP to dispute a decision on their ESA claim; and
- **Appeals data** from Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) – note that this only includes information on completed appeals and not those still in progress. The data does not contain the reason why the appeal was lodged, and this has to be inferred using information on the DWP decision maker decision.

2.1 Simplified Data Process Flow

A simple overview diagram, showing how information from these four data sources are combined can be found on the next page.

Simplified representation of ESA-WCA, MR and Appeals Dataset production



3. Published Data, Methodology and Definitions

DWP's statistical team combines the aforementioned data sources and creates three new databases to underpin their suite of official statistics;

3.1 ESA-WCA Official Statistics Cohort dataset

3.1.1 Overview

The ESA-WCA cohort dataset is a historic dataset containing ESA benefit data, health assessment data and appeals data. Production is performed using a statistical software package named SAS. The dataset contains data from when ESA was introduced in October 2008 to the latest administrative data held. For example the September 2016 release contains:

- NBD benefit administrative data up to March 2016;
- MSRS health assessment data to June 2016;
- HMCTS appeals data to June 2016

This enables us to table ESA benefit, health assessment and appeals information for claims which had a health assessment up to March 2016 (6 month lag).

We also provide tables by ESA claim start date, for claims which started up to the end of December 2015 (9 month lag).

3.1.2 Timeliness

It is important to note that combined data on WCA outcomes, MRs and appeals is not available until at least 9 months in arrears, and even then this may not be enough time to capture the full effect of appeals and longer assessment periods which can sometimes take more than 3 months. The reasons for this are to:

- enable processing of data sourced from inside the department and outside it from HMCTS and the Assessment Provider; and;
- allow time for all decisions to be made and recorded; the assessment phase is usually 13 weeks, but in some cases it will take longer for a decision to be reached.

Headline statistics on MRs are timelier as they aren't linked to the ESA-WCA or Appeals data and therefore include less retrospection and data processing time.

3.1.3 How data is created

The ESA-WCA cohort dataset is created by data merging procedures in SAS to combine ESA benefit, health assessment and appeals information and because we re-create the entire historic back series each quarter it usually takes approximately 5 days of SAS running time to create.

Refreshing the back series entails updating historic numbers with each issue to reflect change based appeals on initial decisions, which can take time to come through, and WCA decisions which are not recorded until after the 13 week assessment phase. It is therefore likely that the statistics underestimate the proportion of claimants who will ultimately be awarded the benefit, by greater amounts for more recent periods.

3.1.4 Retrospection

Figures by claim start date are released at least 9 months in arrears because of the time needed to process data, allow claimants to complete their assessment and align with the Ministry of Justice quarterly publication of Tribunal Statistics release schedule.

3.1.5 Definitions

- a claim is an on-flow to ESA that is made after 27th October 2008, and not a pre-existing IB claim;
- a claimant is anyone who has claimed the benefit; an outcome is where the assessment is completed, meaning in most cases that the limited capability for work questionnaire and face to face assessment has been undertaken, and the claimant is found Fit For Work (FFW) or else placed into the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) or Support Group (SG); and
- a status is where the assessment phase is not completed. The bulk of these are cases closed before assessment and the rest are those which are still at some point in the ESA-WCA process.

For reassessments of IB, a claim is a pre-existing IB, SDA or IS claim going through the reassessment process for ESA after 11th October 2010;

- a claimant is anyone who has claimed incapacity benefits;
- an outcome is where the assessment is completed, meaning in most cases that the limited capability for work questionnaire and face to face assessment has been undertaken, and the claimant is found FFW or else placed into the WRAG or SG. Outcomes are the final DWP Decision Maker's (DM) decision, or the recommendation made by the Assessment Provider, when the DM's

decision is not available; and

- A status (on table 10) is where the reassessment process is not completed. This includes cases closed before assessment and those which have not yet completed the ESA-WCA process.
- The publication uses the final DWP DM's decision, or the recommendation made by the Assessment Provider, when the DM's decision is not available. This provides a more complete analysis. The DM's decision may not be available for the following reasons:
 - For some cases the DWP decision was not yet available when the data was extracted, in these cases the Assessment Provider recommendation is classed as the outcome. The Assessment Provider recommendation will be replaced by the DWP decision once this is available.
 - DWP's benefit administration datasets which underpin this publication do not contain information on all FFW decisions. Information on whether a DM has found a claimant FFW is only available if the claimant appeals this decision. For claimants who have to date not appealed their FFW decision, only information on the Assessment Provider FFW recommendation is available. This will be replaced by the DM's decision if this becomes available (for claimants appealing) or it is inferred that the DM agreed with the Healthcare provider recommendation if the claim was subsequently closed.
 - A claim will be identified as having started the reassessment process when it is referred to the Assessment Provider by DWP Operations. Upon receipt of the referral to the Assessment Provider, the claim is recorded on the MSRS live system. This data received from this live system is matched with DWP administrative data to identify outcomes or statuses. Data is matched using the encrypted National Insurance number and the dates relating to the assessment and decision making process. Note that small discrepancies in dates are tolerated in the matching process, to allow for the time taken for claims to be transferred between DWP and ATOS and any time taken between receipt of case data and when records are updated.

3.2 Mandatory Reconsiderations Data

3.2.1 Overview

The MR statistics are derived from data sourced from the Decision Maker and Case Recorder (DMACR) computer system used by DWP Decision Makers and Jobcentre staff to record decisions within the ESA claim process.

3.2.2 How data is created

Data is extracted from the DMACR LIVE system on a monthly basis. Data processing involves merging the current data with historic data and removing duplicates due to cases from the 'live system' being removed after 14 months.

Sometimes an earlier error is found or a claimant provides additional evidence following a decision on their ESA claim before an MR is raised. In such cases, the DWP Decision Maker (DM) will consider whether this additional evidence changes the original decision. The DM will then choose to revise or not revise the decision accordingly. This is known as 'reconsideration'. If the claimant still disagrees with the resulting decision, they can then raise a MR.

These 'reconsiderations' mimic MRs, but because they are easier to resolve, they are 'revised' at the earliest opportunity by the Benefit Centre instead of being sent to an independent Dispute Resolution team (DRT). Therefore due to operational practices performed within the DMACR system, some MRs are recorded on the source data as 'reconsiderations'.

Following investigation and analysis, analysts found it is not possible to differentiate which of these system actions is a true MR or 'reconsideration'. Therefore, for the purpose of these statistics, 'reconsiderations' occurring after the WCA (for reasons typically associated with MRs) are included in this data. This typically increases the total number of MRs by around 12%.

3.2.3 Retrospection

The DMACR data is received monthly and contains little retrospection, which enables us to publish MR registrations, outcomes and clearance times with just over 1 month lag. For example MR outcomes covering to the end of July 2016 were published on 8th September 2016. The historic figures are refreshed each quarter for each publication therefore the most recent figures may change slightly in the next release.

3.2.4 Definitions

- **MR decision outcomes:** There are multiple outcomes that refer to whether or not the Decision Maker (DM) chooses to revise the decision under dispute;
 - If a decision is categorised as '**Not Revised**' this means that the decision the claimant is questioning has not been changed.
 - If the decision under dispute is classed as '**Revised – Allowed**' then the DM has changed the decision in the claimant's favour. So someone found Fit for Work (FFW) would be awarded ESA or someone put in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) claimant would be put in the Support Group (SG).
 - If the decision is categorised as '**Revised – Disallowed**', the DM, having reconsidered the decision, decides that the claimant is not entitled to ESA at all. This would apply where someone put in the WRAG seeks a revision to go into the SG but is then found FFW. These decisions are not at all common – less than 2% to date.
 - If the decision is categorised as '**Withdrawn**', the claimant has chosen to remove their MR request.
- **MR Decision categories:** There are reasons that result in an ESA claimant raising a MR. For these statistics only those reasons relating to the WCA process have been included.

The main reasons have been categorised as follows:

- The primary reason for a claimant raising a MR is when they are found FFW following a medical assessment. All MRs relating to this topic are categorised as 'Customer disputes FFW decision'.
 - The second category 'Customer failed to attend WCA, provide medical evidence or return questionnaire' incorporates reasons where the claimant has failed to follow the required claim procedures. The MR gives them an opportunity to explain why they didn't comply.
 - The third category is 'Customer disputes ESA group' and contains MRs where the claimant is already assigned to an ESA group.
- **Median ESA-WCA MR clearance time:** The average clearance times is derived using calendar days by calculating the median of the time taken from the date the MR is received in the Benefit Centre (BC) until the date the decision is cleared by the decision maker at the Dispute Resolution Team (DRT). These dates are obtained from the DMACR reporting system.

The date logged on DMACR as the date received is the date when the BC has decided that the MR received is a valid MR, having considered whether they can initially change the decision in the light of any new information.

The cleared date is the date when the decision maker at the DRT has cleared and logged the final decision on the DMACR live system.

The total clearance time therefore includes the time taken to transfer the case to DRT.

3.3 Experimental Cohort Data

3.3.1 Overview

From September 2016, we created an “experimental” cohort dataset incorporating MR data from DMACR into the existing ESA-WCA cohort dataset. This was to enable us to publish information on the different stages of the ESA claim process and better understand the claimant’s end-to-end journey through claiming ESA, WCA, MR and appeal.

This is a particularly complex process due the difficulty matching MRs with the correct referrals. Claimants can have multiple repeat assessment referrals and these referrals can have more than one MR occurring at any point in the customer journey.

3.3.2 How data is created

We create the MR data by running a series of additional SAS programs which:

- Merge the latest ESA-WCA cohort dataset with the DMACR data for the same period. Once merged together, to ensure we capture all possible cases in the joined-up dataset, we need to keep a record of the number of ESA-WCAs and MRs per individual (using a unique customer identifier) then:

We split the merged individual level data into 6 specific scenarios (based on the results) and handle each scenario differently to help identify and keep the best matched record(s) based on observed data characteristics and minimal time periods (using tailored matching windows) for each specific individual.

The 6 scenarios are:

- 1) No ESA-WCA, One or more MRs
- 2) One or more ESA-WCA, No MRs
- 3) Single ESA -WCA, Single MR
- 4) Single ESA-WCA, Multiple MR
- 5) Multiple ESA-WCA, Single MR
- 6) Multiple ESA-WCA, Multiple MR

The five datasets are then concatenated before being sorted by individuals (using a unique customer identifier) and relevant dates.

- Matching data across administrative systems is not an exact science and there are risks around proportionate burden (as we are dealing with millions of records) so we’ve devised a methodology to balance production of the most accurate end-to-end statistics on the ESA-WCA, MR and Appeals process with efficiency.
- To reflect an accurate picture of all MRs, we’ve included ESA-WCA MRs that occur **both** before the work capability assessment (for reasons such as non-return of questionnaire, or failed to attend a medical assessment) **AND** those

that occur after the work capability assessment (often raised to dispute an outcome decision on a particular case).

- MRs for official statistics purposes contain 'reconsiderations' that occur after the WCA, due to them displaying similar characteristics to MRs. **This increases the total number of MRs by around 12%.**
- There are limitations in recording statuses at some points of the end-to-end process, which may mean that outcomes may not be recorded 100% accurately. Where this occurs we have used alternate data variables as proxy's and labelled our outputs as such. For example:
 - The regular cohort data does not capture the initial DWP decision as only the latest DWP decision is kept, therefore we have used the ATOS recommendation as a proxy;
 - To reflect the final DWP decision where an MR has been overturned (but the outcome doesn't show this) we have allocated a small number to a 'higher group' category: for example overturned FFW decisions are allocated to WRAG, and overturned WRAG MRs are labelled SG.
- Due to merging methods there may be occasions (particularly when dealing with multiple MR records) where we get slightly more records than we should. The best matching record(s) are chosen based on the individual's scenario and minimal time periods – but due to limitations caused by many to many joins in SAS, there may be a small number of duplicates inherent in the data. Analysis shows that these duplicates account for less than 1% of the total number of MR's.
- As above, multiple MRs will cause issues when joining the individual pre-WCA MRs, post-WCA MRs and post-WCA Reconsideration datasets, therefore we need to use only the latest MR record in the cohort for each WCA (the latest outcome is likely to be more reliable, as statuses are often re-written as individuals move through the process). Only 1% of these are multiple MR's so should not impact greatly.
- Not all MRs are included in the cohort as there may not be a match across all systems. Therefore when joining the individual pre-WCA MRs, post-WCA MRs and post-WCA Reconsiderations together, we work on the assumption that all individuals exist in ESA-WCA cohort dataset (see table below). This means a small number of MRs may be dropped, because we are unable to use them to tell the full end-to-end story). Around 1% of records are dropped at this stage. For example see table below for MRs which we would not include.

Individual	ESA WCA record	Pre-MR	Post-MR	Post-Recon
NINO1	Yes	No	Yes	No
NINO2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
NINO3	Yes	No	No	Yes
NINO4	Yes	Yes	No	No
NINO5	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
NINO6	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
NINO7	No	No	Yes	No
NINO8	No	Yes	Yes	No

3.3.3 Retrospection

The time lags and retrospection for the experimental cohort dataset mirror that of the regular official statistics cohort dataset. The only difference is that we restrict the experimental data to ESA claims with a start date after October 2013, which is when MRs were introduced.

This experimental cohort dataset will be extended each quarter by including the next three months' worth of data.

4. Which data should be used for what purpose?

It is important to note that the regular official statistics dataset should be used in the first instance to answer ESA-WCA queries, however if the information cannot be obtained from this data, then the ESA-WCA experimental data should be used.

The experimental data is mainly used to give customers a view of the end-to-end process.

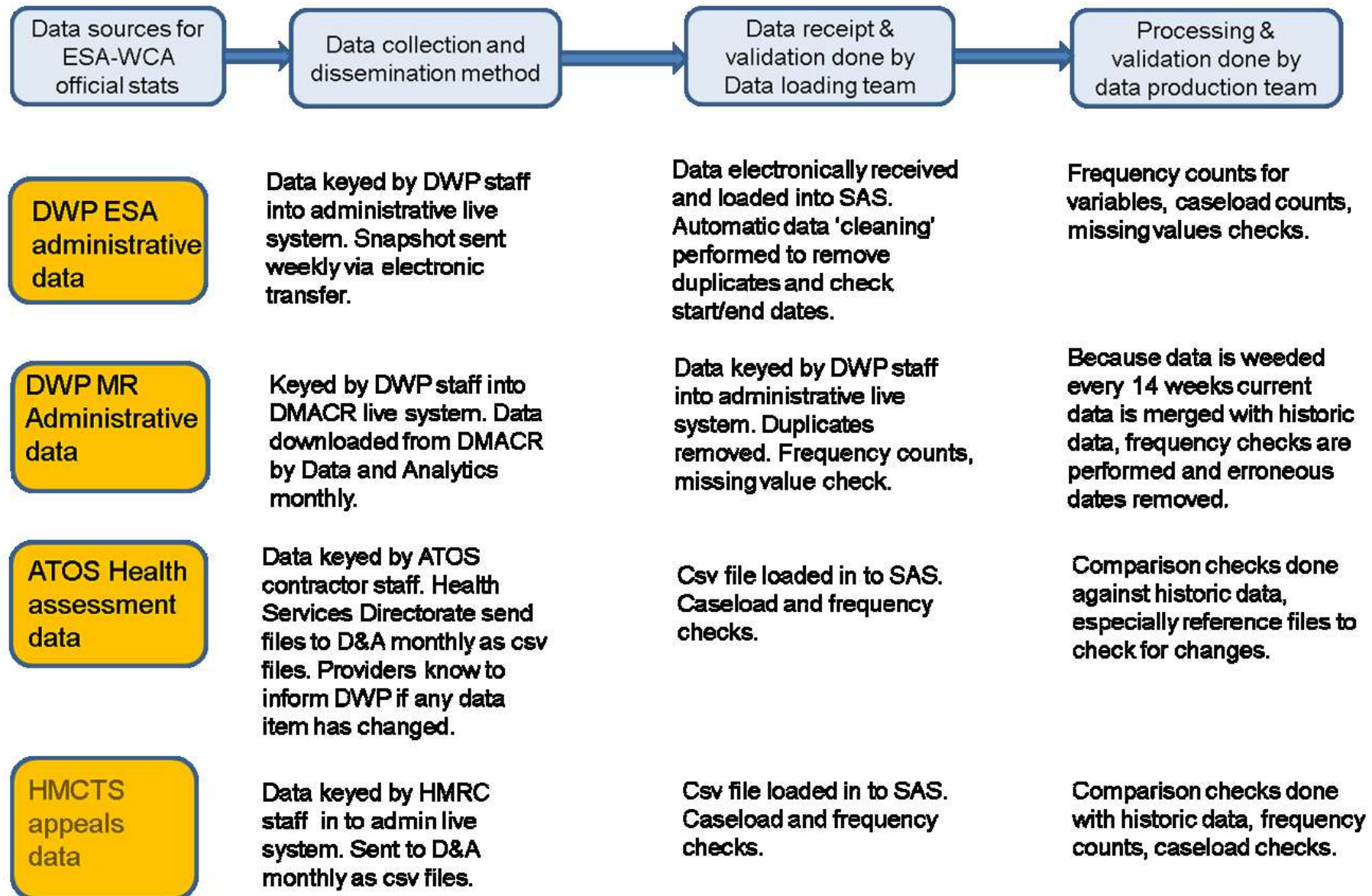
Queries relating to MRs should be initially answered using the MR dataset, as this dataset contains all MRs and the most up to date data. The experimental cohort data should only be used if the information can't be obtained from the regular MR official statistics data.

5. Quality Assurance

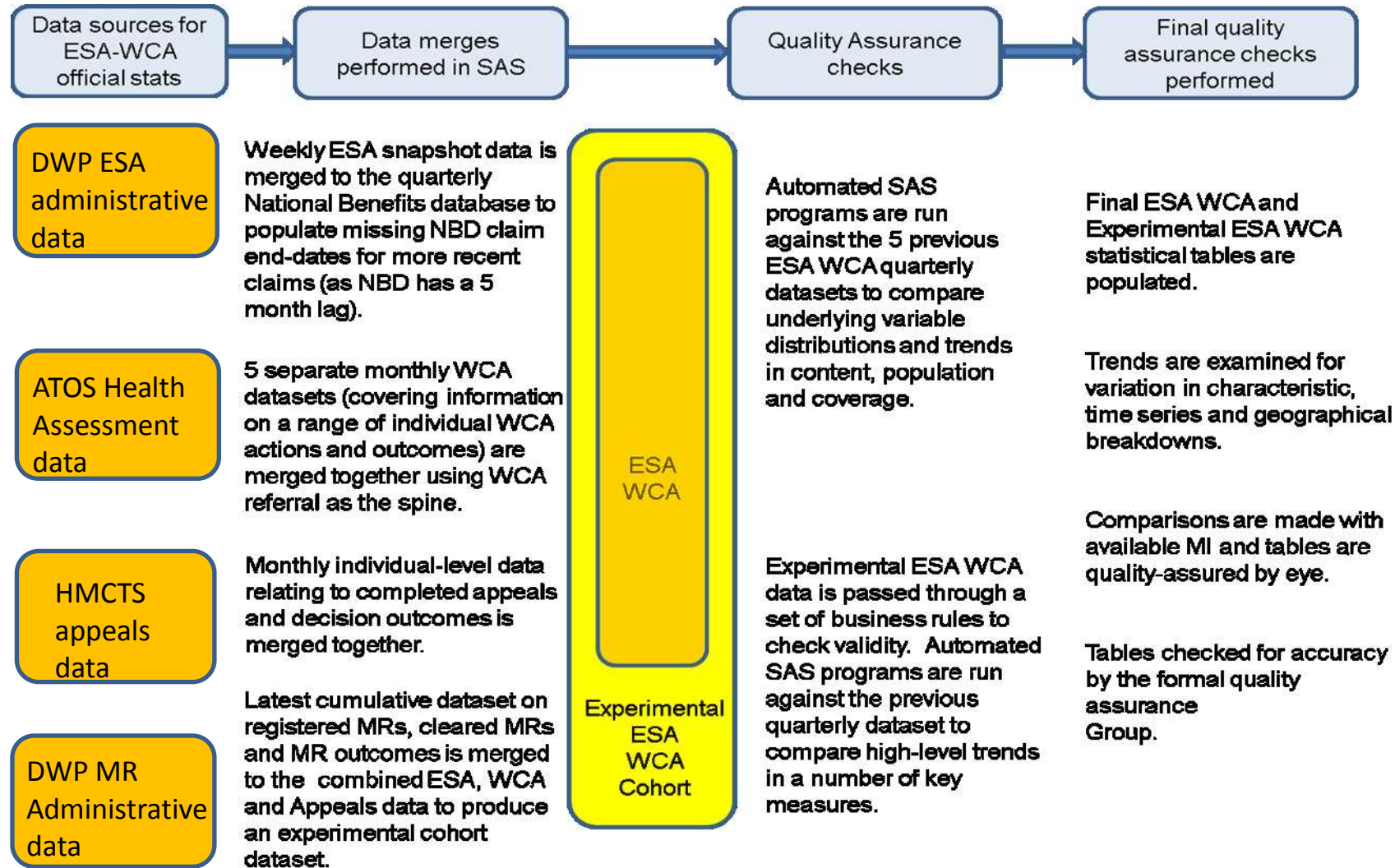
5.1 Quality Assurance Overview

An overview of our quality assurance stages and processes can be found on the next couple of pages.

Source data collection & validation methods for ESA-WCA



Derived ESA-WCA dataset processes and quality assurance



5.1.1 Quality Assurance Overview

Further details of initial and routine quality assurance conducted ahead of each quarterly release are provided below.

5.1.2 Initial quality assurance conducted during data development

A large number of quality assurance checks were carried out during the early development of the statistics to ascertain:

- reliability, completeness and level of disclosure of individual variables;
- levels of duplicate, missing or contradictory information;
- consistency across computer systems (Benefit data, DMACR, HMCTS, ATOS) and with management information, via cross checking;
- monthly build-up of figures in system data;
- trends and variation in characteristic, time series and geographical breakdowns;
- Data linking checks to make sure the benefit claims, ATOS referrals, MRs and Appeals have been linked together accurately;
- consistent results during time series and cohort development via dual methodology testing and manual checking
- Visits to DWP Benefit Centres to assess procedures and use this to help shape quality assurance checks;
- Initial meetings and regular contact with Data Providers to inform of planned changes to source data.

This quality assurance found no preventative issues; it showed the data was robust, consistent with management information and suitable for publishing.

The above processes have subsequently been used to further develop data cleansing rules, assess retrospection and timeliness as well as form routine quality assurance procedures.

5.1.3 Routine Quality Assurance

A standard set of quality assurance procedures are conducted for each quarterly statistical release which consist of checking:

- duplicate, missing or contradictory information;
- accordance across computer systems (DWP and ATOS) and with management information;
- trends and variation in characteristics, time series and geographical breakdowns;
- reference file checks
- underlying data distributions and quarterly dataset comparisons

- dual methodology testing of time series and cohort data;
- checks against Management Information;

These checks are automated wherever possible and manual checks are performed when further investigation is required.

5.1.4 Additional Quality Assurance for experimental cohort data

To quality assure our experimental cohort data we:

1. Ensure underpinning data meets individual quality assurance standards before being used in the overall cohort matching process by defining and channelling data through a set of business rules that valid cases can follow. The approximate proportion of data records that match with these rules is as follows:

- Pre ESA-WCA MR individual level QA: **96%**
- Post ESA-WCA MR individual level QA: **98%**
- Post ESA-WCA Reconsiderations individual level QA: **69%**

You can see from the rates shown above that we are able to better minimise the matching window for MRs as we can pinpoint matching dates with more certainty – we know MRs can be accepted and processed up to 13 months after the initial benefit decision is made. So our match rate is much higher.

However, in principle, as reconsiderations can happen at any point within the end-to-end ESA-WCA process we need to specify a larger matching window to ensure we capture as many matches as we can. We have set the matching window at 1 year before and 3 years after the initial decision being made. This appears to maximise the matching rate, but on comparison, provides a much lower matching rate than the equivalent rate for genuine MR's.

The lower percentage does not mean the records should not be included, but indicates that the records don't necessarily match an expected pattern of behaviour and therefore we may not have matched the exact record – as some elements of case information may still be in progress across the systems. The match will have been made to the correct person at an individual level – but the outcome status may not reflect the precise outcomes. This affects only a small number of cases.

2. We then make aggregate level comparisons against wider data sources and existing published statistics (e.g. appeals rates). MI counts in general are likely to be higher – as official statistics are more refined. We run automated checking programs against the final cohort dataset – to check for unexpected changes in the underlying data distributions for key variables and review high-level time-series charts showing how key statistics change over time.

3. We then table the cohort data and carry out “by eye” checks at summary levels and across lower level time period breakdowns:

Here we look at cumulative ESA-WCA, MR and Appeals cohort data broken down by a range of assessment periods including year, quarter and month of completed ESA-WCA assessment.

This gives a sense of data quality/accuracy and identifies differences in underlying trends. This lower level cohort information is made available to users within our existing suite of published [Excel tables](#).

6. Statistical Publication

This Statistical publication brings together all of the relevant information and figures from the detailed Excel tables and where necessary provides links to more information. It can only be completed once all quality assurance stages have been completed on the data. The statistical publication is a Word document published on the DWP website as a pdf document and contains headline figures (e.g. national totals, top-level figures) and is published quarterly.

DWP pre-announce the release date of the statistical publication at least 1 month in advance, in accordance with release practices set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Dates of future publications can be found on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Publication Hub (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html>)

As the statistical publication is an official statistics release there is an internal departmental requirement to accompany this release with a Submission. The Submission is circulated to the Minister’s office and contains input from policy areas. The Submission is sent one day prior to release day and is fully compliant with the UKSA rules surrounding pre-release access of statistics. It contains a blend of the most notable issues within the latest release, key features, and policy guidance. This document is also quality assured in the same manner as the statistical publication, before being sent out.

Once completed, the lead Statistician will ensure everything has been checked and passed, and if happy with everything, will sign off the Excel tables and publication / summary. All actions are recorded on a release timetable, and are checked off, once complete, to ensure that no steps are missed.

The statistical publication was revamped from September 2016 to include MR information and new, experimental cohort information showing the full end-to-end claimant journey.

7. Release Strategy

The Excel tables and Statistical publication are released each quarter.

The publication is aligned with the [Ministry of Justice Tribunals Statistics release](#). The publication is released on the same date and also uses the data which is 3 month lagged at publication date, for example appeals data covering up to June 2016 was used in the September 2016 publication.

The “ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments including mandatory reconsiderations and appeals” quarterly official statistics publication is added to the [website](#) at 09:30am on Release Day.

Uses and Users of the Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessment Statistical Bulletin

Introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publish an Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessment (ESA-WCA) Statistical Bulletin every quarter. It is used to present information on both new claims and claims undergoing reassessment of incapacity benefits for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in Great Britain. It provides statistics on the outcome of completed assessments, claims still in progress and claims closed before the assessment process is complete.

The ESA-WCA Statistical Bulletin is published quarterly, containing data merged together from the following data sources:-

DWP's benefit administration datasets covering new claims (starting from 27 October 2008)

Atos Healthcare's face to face assessment, ESA85, data and limited capability for work questionnaire, ESA50, data – this will cover those cases where the assessment phase is completed; and

HMCTS's appeals caseload data – note that this only includes information on completed appeals and not those still in progress. The data does not contain the reason why the appeal was lodged, and this has to be inferred using information on the DWP decision maker decision.

Alongside the Statistical Bulletin, there are a number of tables which enable the user to delve into the detail. These are provided to the user via the latest official statistics bulletin which can be found at:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employment-and-support-allowance-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessment>

Known Uses of the ESA-WCA Statistical Bulletin

The Bulletin (and underlying datasets) is used by DWP for:

- Providing the evidence base for assessing the potential effect of policy options
- Monitoring current DWP policy and evaluating recent changes
- Monitoring the effect on the benefit system of the economic cycle
- Answering Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests
- Forecasting benefit expenditure (in conjunction with expenditure statistics)

Outside DWP, the internet based publication mechanism for the Summary means that we cannot understand all the varied uses of these numbers. However, we do know that the Bulletin and underlying datasets are used for:

- Providing general information on the benefit system
- Measuring Government targets relating to DWP
- Academic research
- Policy development and evaluation by local authorities and other welfare to work and pensions stakeholders and providers.

Analysis of Users

We have not conducted an analysis of users of these statistics. The information is only available via www.gov.uk and we are awaiting web analysis to be made available to do this.

However, the following areas within DWP utilise the information

- Health and Wellbeing Directorate
- DWP Operations
- Strategy Group
- Working Age Benefits Division
- Universal Credit Division
- Press Office

And there is a lot of public interest in the data to help support individuals' in their appeal process via Freedom of Information requests (FOI's) and also through Parliamentary Questions.

Valid Uses of the ESA-WCA Statistical Bulletin

The Bulletin can be used for:

- the outcomes of completed Employment and Support Allowance Work Capability Assessments (ESA WCA)
- claims still in progress
- claims closed before the Work Capability Assessment process is complete
- The data is predominately used for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Policy Analysis.

The publication covers both new claims and claims undergoing reassessment of incapacity benefits for Employment and Support Allowance in Great Britain and is produced quarterly.

However, the numbers should not be used for:

- Statistics on ESA claimants Official statistics can be found for ESA claimants with relevant breakdowns from the Quarterly Statistical Summary at http://tabulation-tool.dwp.gov.uk/100pc/esa/tabtool_esa.html
- Statistics on Appeals other than those directly related to ESA-WCA. Appeals information is available from Ministry of Justice Tribunal Services publications available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics>

Areas of Unmet Need

Customers (both within DWP and externally) sometimes request the following:

- More timely release of statistics. National Statistics are released at least 10 months in arrears because of time needed to:
 - enable processing of data sourced from inside the department and outside it from HMCTS and Atos Healthcare;
 - allow time for all decisions to be made and recorded – the assessment phase is usually 13 weeks, but in some cases it will take longer for a decision to be reached;

- align with the Ministry of Justice quarterly publication of Tribunal Statistics release schedule <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/about/statistics#publication-schedule> .
- More detail and more flexible online analysis. A sufficient amount of detail about claimants' ESA-WCA process and appeal is available in order to support the current users' requirements. We'd need legal reason to request transfer of additional data from HMRCT and ATOS if it is outside the scope of the current requirement.

How to comment and get involved

DWP would like to hear your views on our statistical publications. If you use any of our statistics publications, we would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Please email DWP at stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or complete the ongoing questionnaire at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/questionnaire-on-esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-statistics>

In addition to the above, DWP use a number of routes to seek user views. For example:

- National Statistics consultations are run for large proposed changes. For example, in 2013 DWP opened a consultation on "People and households claiming Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment and other benefits: Plans for 2013-2017". The outcome of this consultation will shape the content and format of the Statistical Summary through to 2017 and beyond. The full consultation can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-statistics-showing-claims-for-universal-credit-and-pip>. This consultation has now closed and results will be published in due course.
- DWP publish experimental statistics for new series, whilst seeking user views to inform a full National Statistics release
- Hold six monthly meetings with a selection of users
- New statistics are developed in conjunction with groups of stakeholders to help understand and quality assure output
- Monitor the usage of the DWP website and Tabulation Tool
- Monitor ad hoc analysis requests
- Post updates about DWP Benefit Statistics on Statsusernet. If you would like to receive updates join the Welfare and Benefits community at <http://www.statsusernet.org.uk>

For all other enquiries please contact the appropriate person using the list at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics#contacts-for-statistics>



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments, Great Britain

Background Information

27th March 2014

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1. Information

1.1. Benefit introduction

On 27 October 2008, pre-existing benefits paid on grounds of incapacity and disability, that is Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) and Income Support (IS), were replaced with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for all new claimants. The new benefit is more aligned with Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA):

- placing greater emphasis on assessment of an individual's functional capabilities;
- providing support and encouragement to move claimants with health conditions towards employment; and
- paying at a pre-assessment rate equal to JSA.

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.

This reassessment will not affect claimants if:

- they are entitled to ESA already; or
- they are due to reach State Pension age before 6 April 2014.¹

1.2. Functional assessment

Whether as part of a new claim or the reassessment of incapacity benefit, a key part of the Employment and Support Allowance regime is the Work Capability Assessment process, which is used to assess functional capability for work and eligibility for benefit – please see 4.3 and 4.4. Within this the service contractor, Atos Healthcare, carries out any face to face assessment. They then make a recommendation for each claimant to the DWP's decision maker who in turn makes the final decision. A claimant can have three possible outcomes:

Individuals can be found fit for work –

in this case their claim closes and the claimant can make a claim for Jobseeker's Allowance. They can dispute the ESA decision by requesting a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) (this can be done at the same time as claiming Jobseeker's Allowance). If the MR application fails they can then appeal to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Services (HMCTS). If they do that they can go back onto ESA – it is paid at the assessment phase rate – pending the hearing of the appeal; it will also be backdated to cover the period of the MR application (when ESA is not paid) ;

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 Jobseeker's Allowance. As above this decision can be disputed first through MR and then appeal. Unlike the above process ESA continues to be paid at the higher rate throughout the dispute process; 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.

¹ The State Pension age for women will be between 61 years and 11 months and 62 years. For men it is 65 years.

Both Work Related Activity Group and Support Group claims run until the initial or latest ‘**prognosis period**’ ends, which is usually but not always a standard length of time such as 3, 6, 12, 18 or 24 months based on the individual claimant’s health and then have a repeat assessment.

1.3. Claimant journey

Figure A below depicts the process for new claims of Employment and Support Allowance – starting with the original claim, taking in the functional assessment, and ending with an initial decision, a decision after mandatory reconsideration or appeal, or a repeat decision after a prognosis period. These points form the basis for the analysis of this bulletin and its tables.

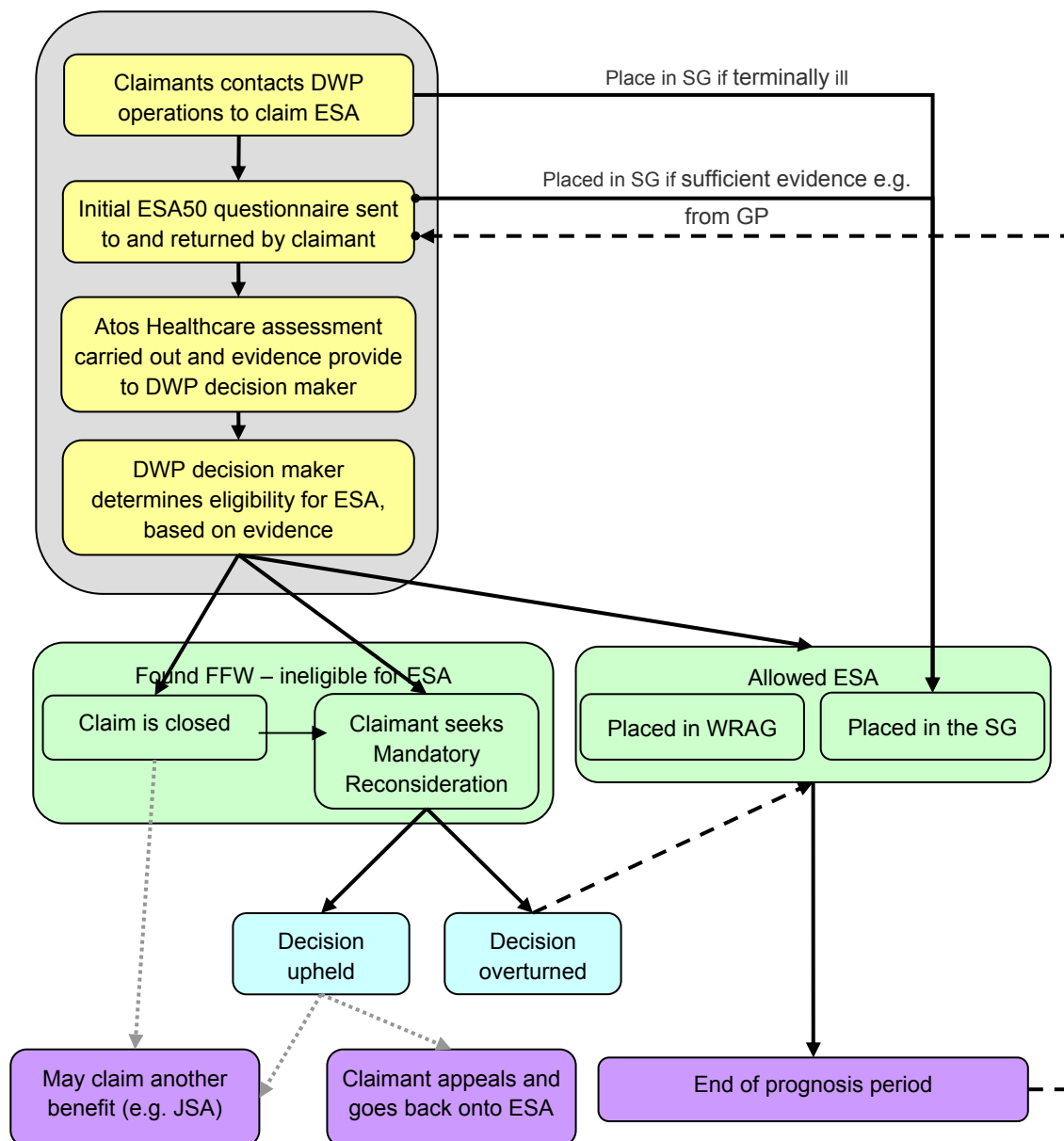


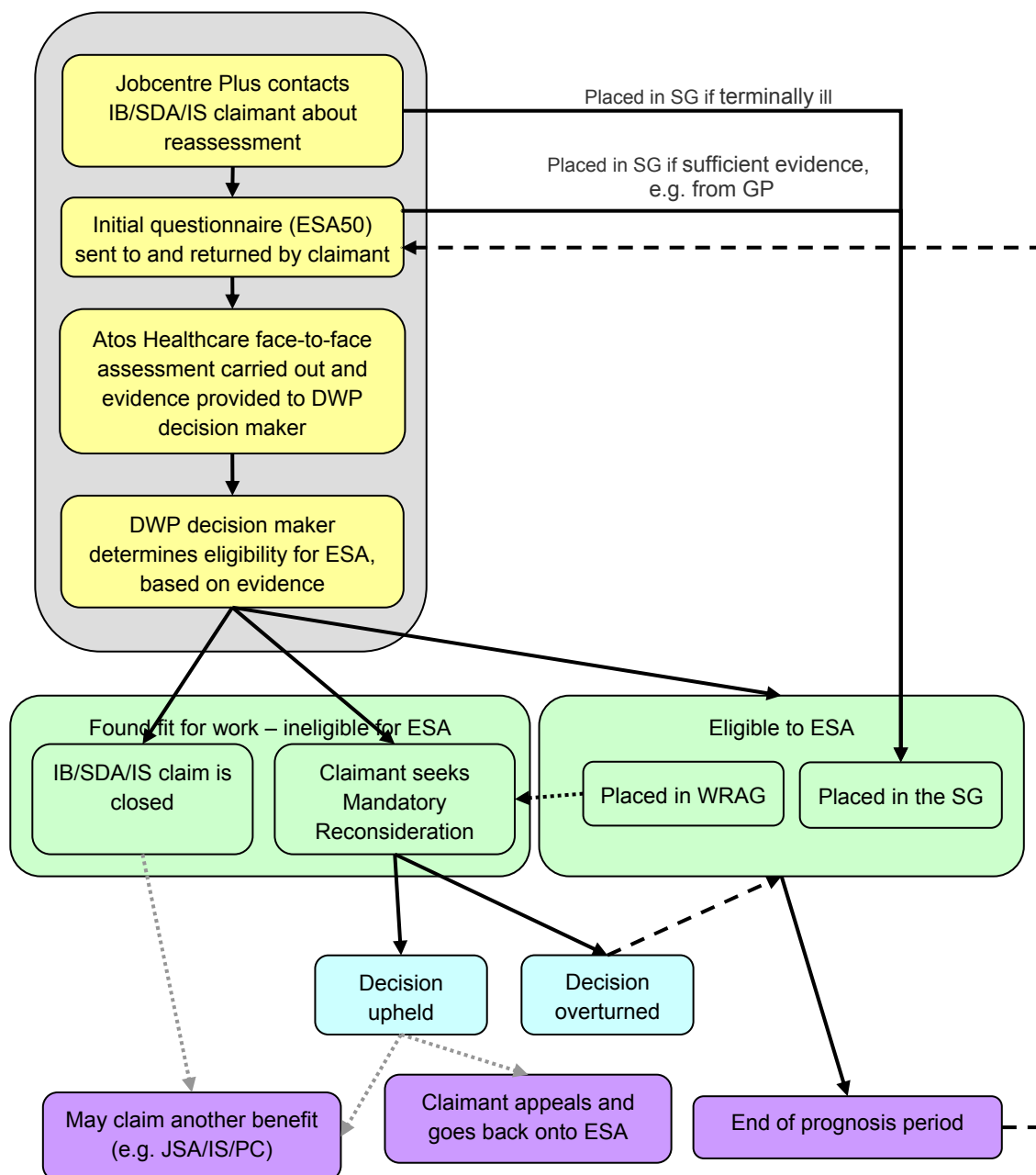
Figure A: Employment and Support Allowance new claims customer journey

Figure B below depicts the process of incapacity benefits reassessments – starting with claimants being informed about the reassessment process, taking in the functional assessment, and ending with an initial decision, a decision after mandatory reconsideration or appeal, or a repeat decision after a prognosis period.

Figure B: High level reassessment journey

1.4. Decision-making basis

The decision on longer-term Employment and Support Allowance entitlement (after assessment) is based on functional impairment.



1.4.1. Reasons for Work Related Activity Group assignment

The possible recorded reasons for a claimant placement in the Work Related Activity Group are:

- scored 15 points or more against the technical descriptors (due to physical functions or mental, cognitive and intellectual functions or a combination of both); or
- non-functional descriptors or 'treat as' limited capability for work provision apply.

Please see 4.5.2.

1.4.2. Reasons for Support Group assignment

The possible recorded reasons for a claimant placement in the Support Group are:

- having a severe functional disability which meets the technical descriptors;
- awaiting, undergoing or recovering from certain types of cancer treatment;
- deemed to be mental or physical health risk;
- having a pregnancy risk; and
- being terminally ill, with a life expectancy of 6 months or less.

1.4.3. Non-specified reasons for allocation to either the Work Related Activity Group or Support Group

Some claims are clerically processed, where only a record of initial decision, and decision after reconsiderations or successful appeal, is available. For these cases there is no information on functional impairment.

1.5. International comparability

This report breaks down the Employment and Support Allowance claims into the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) International Classification of Diseases, 2010 (ICD10).² This enables some comparisons between countries.

Northern Ireland has its own benefit system. However statistics for Northern Ireland WCA are not yet available and are unlikely to be produced in the near future.

1.6. Closed and live claims

A sizeable percentage of **Employment and Support Allowance new claims** were closed before a face to face assessment took place and a small proportion were still in progress at the time the data were extracted. Current data does not allow anything conclusive to be said about the destinations of closed and in progress cases, nor to infer what would have been or would be the outcome of the assessment. However, DWP has published research³ that investigated why some cases were closed before assessment. It found that an important reason why ESA claims in the sample were withdrawn or closed before they were fully assessed was due to individuals recovering and either returning to work, or claiming a benefit more appropriate to their situation. ESA claims were also closed or withdrawn due to non-return of the ESA 50 form. Some customers reported being deterred from continuing their claim by the ESA 50 form, particularly for marginal claims when the form was deemed too time-consuming or for cases where they had an alternative source of income such as part-time, self employment or family support. A fairly widespread reason for claims closed by Jobcentre Plus was that the claim for ESA was income-based, and that the customer's partner had started work. ESA claims had also ended for a variety of other reasons including extended periods abroad, and claiming Maternity Allowance.

² World Health Organisation (2011), 'International Classification of Diseases' <<http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/>>

³ Barnes, H. et al (2011), 'Unsuccessful Employment and Support Allowance claims – qualitative research' https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214543/rrep762.pdf

1.7 Benefit eligibility

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) provides financial help to people of working age who are unable to work because of illness or disability. Eligibility to the assessment phase of the benefit is dependent on personal circumstances. The most current information on eligibility is available on the GOV.UK website.

The GOV.UK website provides a complete explanation of eligibility at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance#overview>

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/eligibility>

On 27 October 2008, pre-existing benefits paid on grounds of incapacity and disability, that is Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) and Income Support (IS), were replaced with ESA for all new claimants. Claimants already in receipt of these benefits at the said date could remain on those benefits (if they continued to satisfy the rules of entitlement) until their claims are reassessed to see if they qualify for ESA.

IB and IS

IB is a contributory benefit payable if the claimant had paid sufficient National Insurance (NI) contributions. People without sufficient NI contributions could claim IS on grounds of incapacity instead. IS could be paid on its own or it could top up IB.

Eligibility for IB and IS was assessed under the Personal Capability Assessment (PCA). The PCA was a points-related assessment of the extent to which a claimant's condition affected their ability to perform a range of activities. It consisted of two parts: a physical/sensory assessment and a mental health assessment. The WCA was a logical development of the PCA.

SDA

Some claimants still get SDA due to being severely disabled and incapable of work before April 2001.

1.7.1 Claimant conditions

Employment and Support Allowance can be awarded on the basis of low income or National Insurance (NI) contributions:

Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA-IR) – in this instance a claimant may be entitled to claim the benefit (regardless of how much they have paid by way of NI contributions), if they satisfy the conditions relating to financial position. This means they must have savings of less than £16,000, and if they have a partner or civil partner, this person must work for less than 24 hours per week on average; and

Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA-C) – in this case a claimant may be entitled to claim contributory Employment and Support Allowance if they have paid enough NI contributions. From May 2012, the Welfare Reform Act 2012, introduced a time limit to ESA-C to 12 months for those in the Work Related Activity Group; however those exhausting ESA-C may still be eligible for ESA-IR if they meet the conditions.

Note that those entitled to ESA-C in the Support Group and ESA-IR: Work Related Activity Group and Support Group claimants are not subject to this time limit.

Starting in 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. If they qualify for ESA their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim. For claimants who were previously in receipt of IB or SDA, their benefit will be converted to contributory ESA; if they were previously in receipt of IS their benefit will be converted to income-related ESA. In the same way as with IB, contributory ESA can be paid with an income-related top up and a transitional addition if appropriate.

1.7.2 Youth provision

Prior to May 2012, special ESA-C provisions applied for certain young people. To get this, a claimant needed to be aged between 16 and 20 (or under 25, if in education or training at least 3 months immediately before turning 20). Entitlement was based on inability to work because of health for at least 28-weeks, and having been resident and present in Great Britain for 26-out-of-52-weeks prior to the claim. From May 2012, the Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished this provision and all new claims of this kind are now subject to the same ESA-C conditions.

1.7.3 Overseas claimants

A person living or working abroad may be entitled to claim Employment and Support Allowance. To do this a claimant might have paid enough UK NI Contributions in the past or the equivalent in certain other countries – either a country within the European Economic Area or one that has a reciprocal social security agreement with the UK; or else they might have worked abroad for an employer based in the UK and paid NI contributions for the first 52 weeks of that employment.

IB and SDA claimants living overseas will have their claims reassessed following broadly the same process as that for UK residents. However, there are some differences both in the process and in the options available to overseas customers after a decision has been made.

1.8 Benefit structure – ESA new claims

Time on Employment and Support Allowance is divided into two phases by the process of assessing work capability.

1.8.1 Assessment phase (this lasts 13 weeks)

When a claimant first applies for the benefit, they are put into the assessment phase. During this time, they are assessed through the Work Capability Assessment process. Individual claimants do not have to engage in work-related activity. They receive benefit paid at the assessment phase rate (equivalent to JSA personal allowances).

While in the assessment phase, the claimant has to provide up-to-date medical certification of their disability or illness, and is assessed against the criteria set out in legislation. Most of them are sent a limited capability for work questionnaire (also known as the ESA50) and following completion are invited to a face to face assessment carried out by a trained healthcare professional (HCP) working for Atos Healthcare. However, depending on the severity of an individual's condition some claimant journeys will differ; for example those who are terminally ill are fast-tracked into the Support Group on the basis of paper evidence rather than having an assessment.

Information gathered through the questionnaire and the face to face assessment, together with any other evidence provided by the claimant or requested by Atos Healthcare, is used by the DWP's decision maker to determine their eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance main phase.

1.8.2 Main phase (outcomes of the Work Capability Assessment process)

After the face to face assessment, a 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 JSA or it remains open pending recourse against the decision, via reconsideration from DWP or appeal to HMCTS. If redress is sought, the pre-assessment rates remain until closure;

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 rate of 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.

1.8.3 Repeat assessments

All claimants in the Work Related Activity Group and Support Group are given a prognosis indicating when they should be assessed again. Individuals are then reassessed through repeat assessments after the initial or last prognosis period expires.

The interval between assessments is usually but not always a standard length of time such as 3, 6, 12, 18 or 24 months based on the claimant's health. This is to ensure that they are still eligible for Employment and Support Allowance and are allocated to the correct group.

1.9 Benefit structure – reassessment of incapacity benefits

IB, SDA and IS claimants are assessed through the WCA process to determine their capability for work and eligibility for ESA whilst still on their current benefit. Customers who qualify for conversion to ESA will move directly into the 'main phase' of ESA.

They will immediately be placed in either the WRAG or SG, receiving the relevant personal allowance and component and transitional addition if appropriate.

1.9.1 Reassessment of IB, SDA and IS claims

IB, SDA or IS claimants are informed by Jobcentre Plus when their benefit becomes due for reassessment.

Claimants will then be assessed through the WCA process. As part of the WCA process claimants are sent a limited capability for work questionnaire (ESA50) and following completion may be invited to a face to face assessment carried out by a trained healthcare professional working for Atos Healthcare. However, depending on the severity of an individual's condition some claimant journeys will differ; for example those who are terminally ill or otherwise have sufficient medical evidence are fast-tracked into the SG on the basis of paper evidence rather than having a face-to-face assessment.

Information gathered through the questionnaire and any face to face assessment, together with any other evidence provided by the claimant, is used by the DWP's decision maker to determine whether their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim.

Outcomes of the WCA process – Main phase

The WCA process can have three possible outcomes for an IB, SDA or IS claimant:

Individuals can be found fit for work –

in this case their IB, SDA and/or IS claim closes. The claimant may be entitled to JSA, IS on grounds other than incapacity for work, or PC. If the claimant disagrees with the decision they can ask the DWP decision maker to reconsider the decision or appeal to HMCTS. ESA can be paid at the assessment phase rate pending the outcome of the appeal;

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work –

in this instance their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim and they are placed in the WRAG. Claimants in the group are expected to take part in WFIs with their personal adviser. They are not expected to work, but are provided with help and support to prepare for work and eventually move into work where possible. Claimants can ask for the placement into the WRAG to be reconsidered, or appealed; and

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work and in addition, limited capability for work related activity –

in this situation their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim and they are placed in the SG. Those in this group have the most severe functional impairments and so are provided with unconditional support and receive a higher rate of benefit than people in the WRAG.

1.9.2 Repeat assessments

All claimants in the WRAG and SG are given a prognosis indicating when they should be assessed again. Individuals are then again assessed through repeat assessments after the prognosis period expires. Similar mandatory reconsideration and appeal arrangements apply where claimants disagree with the decision to that described in the previous paragraph.

The interval between assessments is usually but not always a standard length of time such as 3, 6, 12, 18 or 24 months based on the claimant's health. This is to ensure that they are still eligible to ESA and are allocated to the correct group.

2. Work Capability Assessment development

The Work Capability Assessment was developed by medical and technical experts alongside disability organisations. It is subject to continuous review.

2.1 Department-led Review

A Department-led review of the Work Capability Assessment began in March 2009 and engaged with medical and other experts and disability representative groups. It was published on 29 March 2010 and made some recommendations for how the Work Capability Assessment could be developed. The review's recommendations included:

- making greater provision for individuals awaiting or between courses of chemotherapy;
- making greater provision for individuals receiving residential treatment for drug or alcohol misuse;
- expanding the Support Group to cover more people with certain communication problems and severe disability due to mental health conditions;
- taking greater account of how an individual has adapted to a condition or disability; and
- simplifying the language of the descriptors to ensure fair, consistent and transparent application.

These changes were implemented on 28 March 2011.

2.1.1 Revision of the functional assessment

Following the department-led review of the Work Capability Assessment, revised criteria were introduced on 28 March 2011. Claimants who received the limited capability for work questionnaire at or after 14 March 2011 were assessed under the new criteria. What this means is that between March and June 2011 the majority were assessed under the revised criteria.

2.1.2 Independent reviews of the Work Capability Assessment

The Government has a statutory commitment to independently review the Work Capability Assessment annually for the first five years of its operation. The first four reviews have been undertaken and published.

In the first review, published in November 2010, Professor Harrington made a series of practical recommendations for improving the Work Capability Assessment, all of which the Government has accepted and now implemented. These include:

- improving the way Jobcentre Plus communicates with claimants;
- introducing mental, cognitive and intellectual 'champions' into assessment centres to improve the assessment of these functions;
- empowering and improving training for decision makers; and
- improving the transparency of the process.

In the second review, published in November 2011, Professor Harrington (while satisfied that the department has taken the advice in his first review) made further recommendations to improve the WCA's fairness and effectiveness. The Government has endorsed Professor Harrington's second review; and accepted the majority of its recommendations. For the remainder they conducted work to assess the feasibility and implications of the remaining recommendations and have now accepted these.

In the third review, Professor Harrington set out a series of recommendations to the Government which complement the recommendations from his first and second reviews. The Government welcomed Professor Harrington's findings and recommendations and has responded with how it will work towards achieving all of Professor Harrington's recommendations.

On 26 February 2013 the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions appointed Dr Paul Litchfield to undertake the fourth independent review of the Work Capability Assessment.

In the fourth independent review, published in December 2013, Dr Litchfield has made 32 recommendations to the Department to improve the WCA and 5 further recommendations to the Department for Social Development in Northern Ireland. The key findings and recommendations from his report are around simplifying the WCA process, improving the way people going through an assessment feel they are treated, improving decision making and improving knowledge of mental health for Decision Makers and Healthcare Professionals.

The Government has welcomed Dr Litchfield's recommendations and is currently carefully considering them before publishing a response in the first quarter of 2014.

Background and full text of reports are on the departmental website at the following links:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/simplifying-the-welfare-system-and-making-sure-work-pays/supporting-pages/improving-the-work-capability-assessment>

2.2 Assignment information

2.2.1 Reason for group placement

The tables below detail some of the reasons for placement into the Work Related Activity Group or Support Group. The reasons offered below are merely inferences based on the claimant's medical condition and their assessment decision. This is because Employment and Support Allowance entitlement and allocation is not based on the condition of the claimant but instead is based on the effect that this has on their ability to work. For example an individual will not qualify simply because they have arthritis, but could qualify if their condition means they have severe difficulty holding a pen.

2.2.2 Reasons for assignment to the Work Related Activity Group

Figure C below provides potential reasons for placement in the Work Related Activity Group with descriptions.

Figure C: Reason for placement in the Work Related Activity Group

Reason	Explanation
15 points or more	<p>This is where claimants score 15 points or more against the functional descriptors laid down in legislation. This award is based on the following functional impairment descriptors:</p> <p><u>Physical functions</u></p> <p>Lower limb – inability to mobilise, stand, sit;</p> <p>Upper Limb – inability to reach, pick up and/or lack of other manual dexterity;</p> <p>Sensory – inability to make self understood, understand communication or navigate safely</p> <p>Continence – limitation of control over the bladder and bowel;</p> <p>Consciousness – involuntary loss of consciousness;</p> <p><u>Mental, cognitive and intellectual functions</u></p> <p>Understanding and focus – this relates to inability to learn tasks, to be aware of hazards, inability to initiate and complete tasks;</p> <p>Adapting to change – this is to do with inability to cope with changes to routine, to get about; and</p> <p>Social Interaction – this relates to inability to deal with other people.</p> <p>Note that scoring 15 points or more is the most prevalent reason for being in the WRAG.</p>
Medical reasons	<p>This combines claimants with non-functional descriptors or those treated as limited capability to work at assessment. This award can be based on the following non-functional impairments:</p> <p>suffering from a life-threatening disease – this is where there is medical evidence that the disease is uncontrollable or uncontrolled by a recognised therapeutic procedure, and in the case of a disease that is uncontrolled there is a reasonable cause for it not to be controlled by a recognised therapeutic procedure; and</p> <p>suffering from some specific disease or bodily or mental disablement – this is whereby reasons of such disease or disablement, there would be a substantial risk to the mental or physical health of any person if they were found not to have limited capability for work.</p> <p>It can also be based on the following limited capability to work:</p> <p>undergoing regular treatment - this means receiving regular weekly treatment, such as by way of haemodialysis for chronic renal failure, treatment by way of plasmapheresis or by way of radiotherapy, or by way of total parenteral nutrition for gross impairment of enteric function;</p> <p>undergoing medical or other treatment as an in-patient to a hospital or similar institution;</p> <p>recovering from treatment as an in-patient to a hospital or similar institution;</p> <p>undergoing pregnancy and in receipt of Maternity Allowance with an ESA top-up;</p> <p>during a period of confinement for pregnancy; and</p> <p>pregnant where there is a risk of harm to the mother and/or child.</p>
Clerical assessment	<p>This is where the Atos Healthcare recommendations are recorded clerically. In such cases, WRAG assignment is determined from the DWP decision maker information only, and so no more detail about the nature of the health situation is recorded on the database.</p>
At reconsideration	<p>There are some cases because they come after DWP reconsiderations that are recorded clerically. Once again in such cases, WRAG assignment is determined from the DWP decision maker information only, and so no more detail about the nature of the health situation is recorded on the database.</p> <p>Here the Atos Healthcare recommendations may differ from the DWP decision, or else recommendation might have changed but the revision is not on the system.</p>

After appeal	<p>This is where a small number of cases because they come after appeals to HMCTS in favour of the claimant are recorded clerically. Once more in such cases, WRAG assignment is determined from the DWP decision maker information only, and so no more detail about the nature of the health situation is recorded on the database.</p> <p>Here the Atos Healthcare recommendations may differ from the DWP decision (after appeal process). Note that claimants initially found FFW in the process of appealing remain in this category for the purpose of statistical outputs until their cases are heard.</p>
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The GOV.UK website provides a broad explanation at the following link, including a document explaining the functional impairments in further detail:

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/overview>

2.2.3 Reasons for assignment to the Support Group

Figure D below provides potential reasons for placement in the Support Group with descriptions.

Figure D: Reason for placement in the Support Group

Reason	Explanation
Chemotherapy/Radiotherapy	<p>This is where claimants are awaiting, receiving or recovering from certain types of cancer treatment, which qualifies them for the SG. This award is based on the following limited capability to work at assessment:</p> <p>The claimant is—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) receiving treatment for cancer by way of chemotherapy or radiotherapy; (ii) likely to receive such treatment within six months after the date of the determination of capability for work; or (iii) recovering from such treatment, and the Secretary of State is satisfied that the claimant should be treated as having limited capability for work;
Physical or Mental Health Risk	This is where regulations allow that in 'exceptional circumstances' claimants be put into the (WRAG or) SG, if there would be serious risk to the mental or physical health of any person were they found FFW (and they do not meet the usual criteria for WRAG or SG).
Pregnancy Risk	This is where pregnant claimants are put in the SG, if there is a serious risk to her own health or that of the unborn child were they found FFW.
Severe disability	This is where claimants meet the functional criteria for the SG, covering physical and mental capacity
Terminally ill	This is where claimants are diagnosed as terminally ill with a prognosis of 6 months or less.

Note that the department does not always capture the reason for placement in the Support Group (as with the Work Related Activity Group). This is often due to assessments recorded clerically where the reason is not stated, such as where assignment follows an appeal or reconsideration.

The legislation, specifically Part 6, gives more detail on allocation at the following link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2008/794/contents/made?view=plain>



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Official Statistics

ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments including mandatory reconsiderations and appeals: December 2016

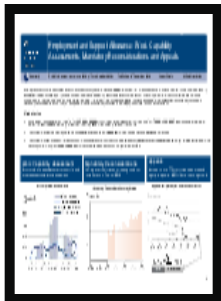
From:Department for Work and Pensions

First published:8 December 2016

Part of:Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments

Outcomes of Employment Support Allowance Work Capability Assessments including mandatory reconsiderations and appeals information.

Documents



[Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments, Great Britain, quarterly official statistics bulletin](#)

Ref: ISBN 978-1-78425-883-2
PDF, 311KB, 11 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.
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[Data tables: Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments, Great Britain](#)

MS Excel Spreadsheet, 39.7MB

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Detail

This publication provides statistics on:

- the outcomes of completed Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessments
- claims still in progress
- claims closed before the Work Capability Assessment process is complete
- outcome of appeals up to September 2016

This release also includes:

- ESA Work Capability Assessment mandatory reconsideration registrations and outcomes to October 2016
- new statistics on ESA Work Capability Assessment mandatory reconsideration clearance times to October 2016
- more detailed experimental cohort information

The publication covers both new and repeat ESA claims and information on claims undergoing reassessment of incapacity benefits for ESA in Great Britain.

Read background information on these statistics in [ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessment policies and statements](#).

Find more about DWP statistics and contact details on the [Statistics at DWP page](#).

Find details of future DWP statistics releases in the [statistics release](#)

[calendar](#).

Next release date: 9 March 2017.

Published:

8 December 2016

From:

Department for Work and Pensions

Part of:

Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments

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Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessments, Mandatory Reconsiderations and Appeals



Quarterly

ESA-WCA outcomes to June 2016 (MRs to October 2016)

Published: 8th December 2016

Great Britain

Official Statistics

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), which replaced incapacity benefits in October 2008, offers support for ill or disabled people. Claimants must participate in a Work Capability Assessment (WCA) to check eligibility and are placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) which offers support in preparing for work, or the Support Group (SG) for those unable to work. If they are not eligible to claim ESA they are found Fit for Work (FFW). Since October 2013, if claimants disagree with their assessment outcome, they can ask for a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR). If they still disagree with the MR outcome they can appeal to Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS).

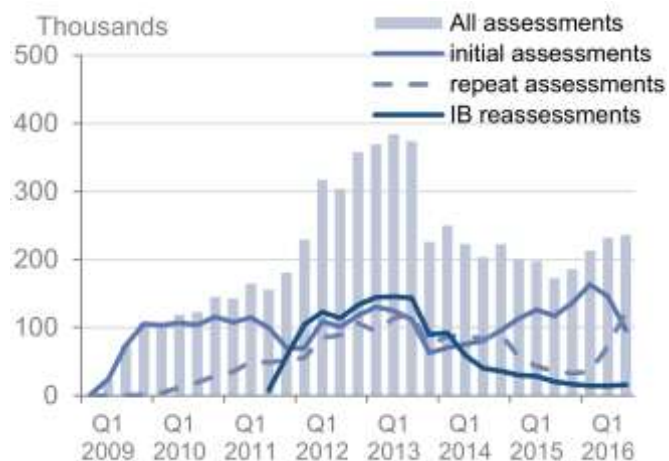
Main stories

- Completed initial assessment volumes fell from 145,200 to 96,300 and completed repeat assessment volumes rose from 72,600 to 123,800. Repeat assessments were re-started in December 2015 after being suspended in January 2014 due to capacity issues at the provider.
- The number of ESA-WCA MRs registered in October 2016 remained stable at 16,600. 89% of MRs cleared in October 2016 were not revised.
- The number of appeals heard on FFW decisions on initial assessments (for claims which started between July 2015 and September 2015) showed a slight increase compared with the previous quarter – rising from 3,400 to 3,600. 42% of the completed appeal decisions in this quarter were upheld.

Work Capability Assessment

Completed initial assessments continue to fall and repeat assessments volumes have risen

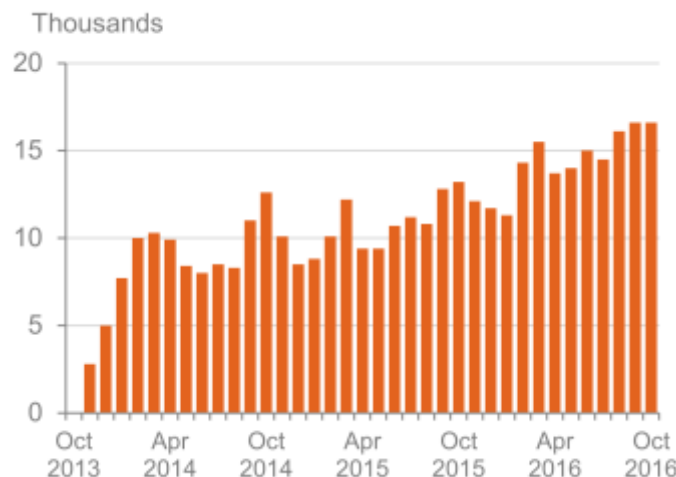
All Completed Assessments



Mandatory Reconsiderations

MR registrations follow an increasing trend, but remain stable in October 2016

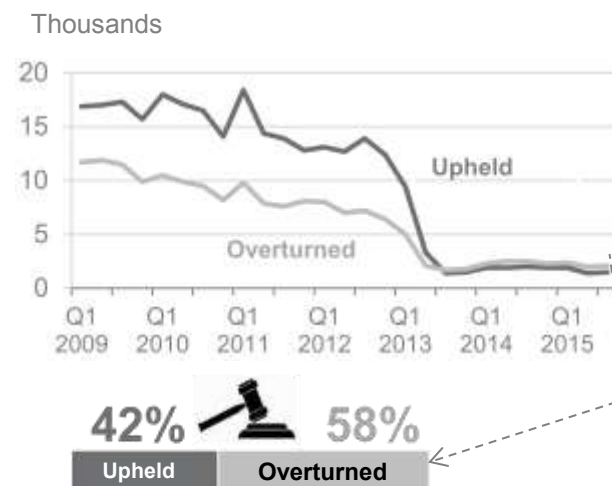
Mandatory Reconsiderations registered



Appeals

Appeals on initial FFW outcomes have increased slightly this quarter. 42% of decisions being upheld

Appeals completed (for initial assessments)



At a glance

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Comments? We welcome feedback

Published: 8th December 2016

Next edition: March 2017

ISBN 978-1-78425-883-2

What you need to know

These statistics are released quarterly and cover ESA-WCA outcomes, MRs and appeals information sourced from:

- DWP's benefit administration datasets including MR data
- Healthcare provider assessment data
- HMCTS appeals data for completed appeals

In addition to the ESA-WCA official statistics contained in this release, we have developed some extra experimental ESA-WCA cohort figures by merging MR data with benefit, assessment and HMCTS data to allow us to track claimants through the stages of their ESA-WCA journey – see page 3.

To help visualise this we have also introduced a sankey diagram to display the volumes flowing through each stage of the process – see page 4.

These extra statistics have been labelled 'experimental' and users should be aware of possible methodology issues and data limitations whilst using them. See [methodology note](#) for more information.

Note: robust data for both the regular and experimental cohort information is only available for claims that began at least 9 months ago due to time required to complete assessments, record and process data accurately and align with other publications. **Hence, only claims made before the end of March 2016, assessments which were completed up to end of June 2016 and appeal outcomes for ESA claims which started up to September 2015 are included in these statistics.** Throughout the release, figures are presented by assessment date, unless otherwise stated.

ESA Work Capability Assessment, Mandatory Reconsiderations and Appeals process

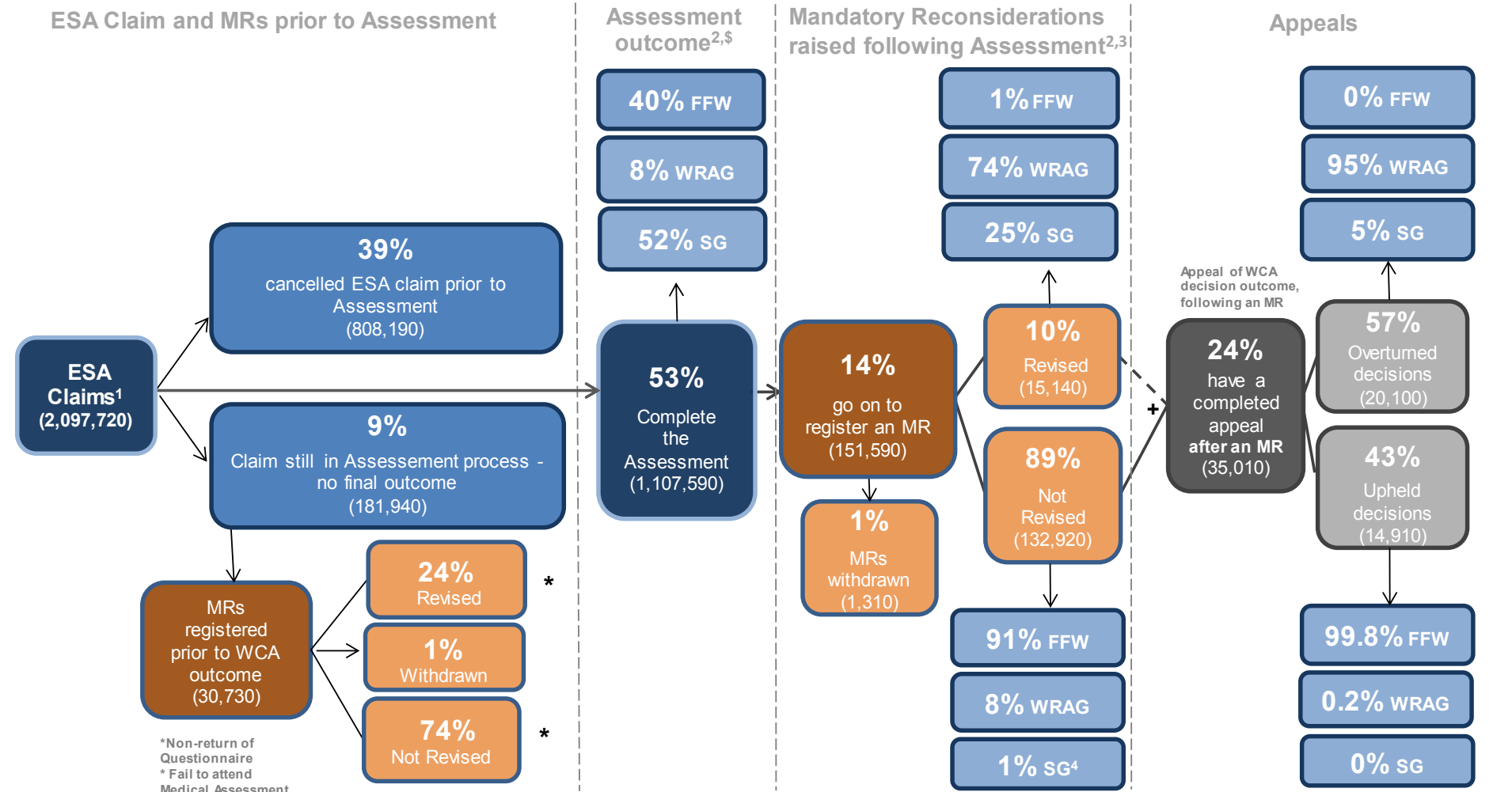
The following flow chart, containing experimental cohort data, shows the claim process to assess ESA entitlement. If claimants disagree with their assessment outcome they can ask the Jobcentre to review it by registering an MR. Following the MR outcome if the claimant still disagrees with the decision, they can appeal to Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service.

There are 3 types of Work Capability Assessments:

- Initial assessment – for new ESA claims
- Repeat assessment – existing claimants must undergo regular reviews; timescales depend on medical condition
- Incapacity Benefit reassessment (IBR); all IB claimants will eventually be reassessed for ESA

The figures presented in both the flow chart and sankey diagram cover all parts of the ESA-WCA process for claimants starting their ESA claim between October 2013 and March 2016 for **initial and repeat assessments only**.

Overview of the Work Capability Assessment, Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) and Appeals process for initial and repeat ESA claims starting October 2013 – March 2016 - (Experimental)



Footnotes:

1) All ESA initial and repeat claimants between October 2013 and March 2016* (the latest period that allows sufficient time for final outcomes to have been recorded). Totals may not sum due to rounding. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. FFW=Fit for Work, WRAG=Work Related Activity Group, SG=Support Group.

* A small number (around 10%) of pre-assessment MR registrations may go onto appeal their MR decision. + Some claimants may still not agree with the group they have been placed in and go on to appeal the MR decision. Less than 2% of all post ESA WCA appeals come from the revised grouping.

2) Statistics show the outcome based on healthcare provider recommendation - in some cases this may not always be the final outcome as outcomes are sometimes changed due to reconsideration. Due to data source recording limitations, this is the best proxy available. A proxy is also used to determine a small proportion of revised MR outcome results - where the final result is not captured.

3) A number of FFW cases have their case outcomes revised but still fall within FFW group as they still aren't awarded enough points to move to a different group.

4) A small amount of cases are 'Not Revised' and appear in SG. We are currently unaware of the exact reasoning for this. Therefore please treat these cases with caution.

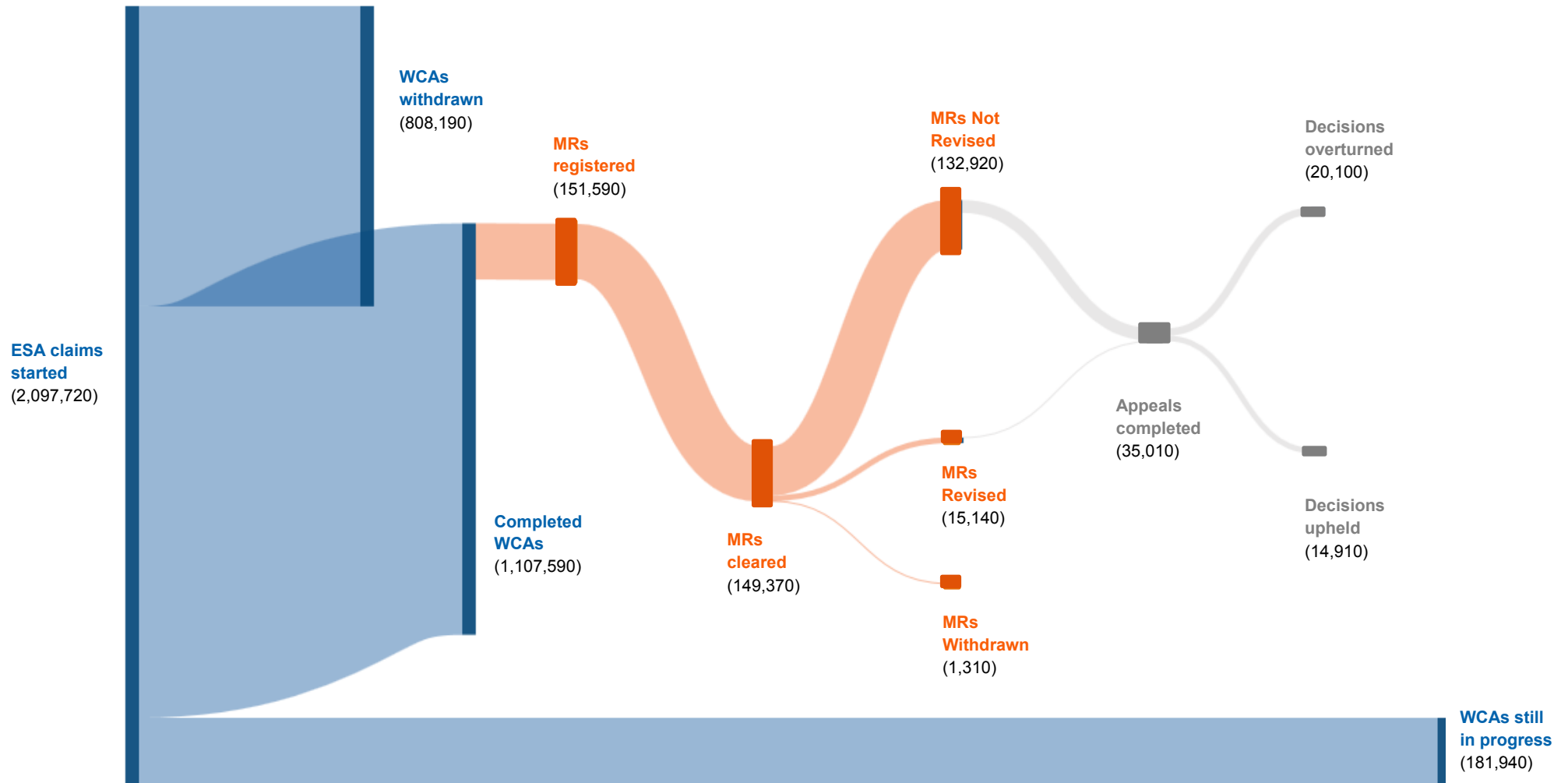
\$ Some cases may not yet have an outcome, or may have been withdrawn, cancelled, clerical cases - so WCA outcome percentages are derived using those with an actual FFW, WRAG or SG outcome.

We only get information for completed appeals - so we don't know how many appeals are in progress.

Overview of the Work Capability Assessment, Mandatory Reconsideration and Appeals process October 2013 – March 2016 cohort - (Experimental)

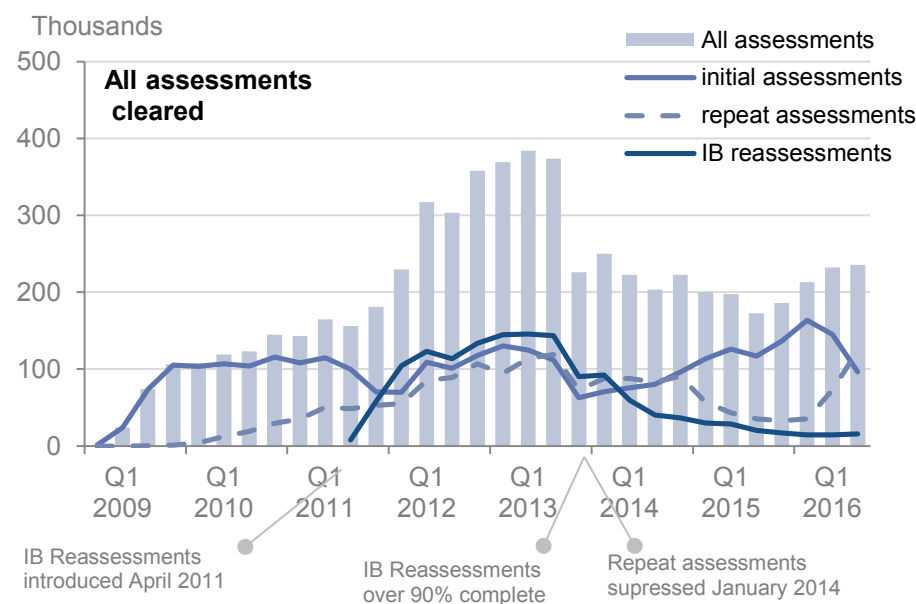
The following diagram gives a visual representation of proportions at each stage of the ESA Work Capability Assessment (WCA) process. The relative thickness of each segment represents the volume of cases flowing through each stage. For all ESA claims which started between October 2013 and March 2016:

- Around 53% have had a completed WCA (1,107,590 assessments). WCAs relating to the remaining claims are either still in progress or have been withdrawn/cancelled.
- 151,590 Mandatory Reconsiderations (MRs) have been registered in relation to the 1,107,590 completed WCAs.
- The diagram shows that 99% of these MRs have been cleared, with the decision maker's original decision being revised 10% of the time.
- Almost one in four claimants who have registered an MR, then go on to have a completed appeal. Of this group (35,010 cases), the latest case decision was upheld 43% of the time.



ESA initial and repeat assessment outcomes, IB reassessments

53 % of assessments cleared in the latest quarter were for ESA repeat assessments



Main Findings

In the latest quarter to June 2016 the majority of cleared ESA-WCA assessments were for repeat assessments.

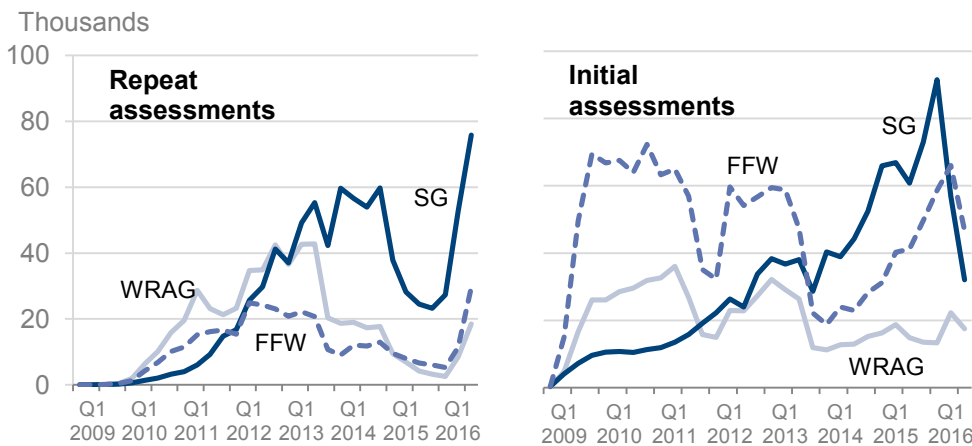
At the end of 2013, IB reassessment and repeat assessment volumes dropped significantly. The majority of IB reassessments were completed by that point and the focus was moved from assessing existing claims (including repeat assessments) to clearing new claims. IB reassessments are now 97%¹ complete.

As expected, ESA repeat assessment volumes have increased in recent quarters as processing was re-introduced in December 2015, after a year of focussing on initial claims.

The effects of this can be seen in recent quarters. In the latest quarter to June 2016, 123,800 repeat assessments were cleared compared to only 35,400 for the same period a year earlier.

See accompanying [tables](#) for full data.

A decrease in initial assessments is broadly offset by a corresponding increase in repeat assessments this quarter



Overall, combined numbers of initial and repeat claims assigned to SG, WRAG and FFW remain fairly stable this quarter (see main stories).

However, in recent quarters the number of repeat assessments being undertaken has sharply increased, meaning greater numbers of SG, WRAG and FFW outcomes.

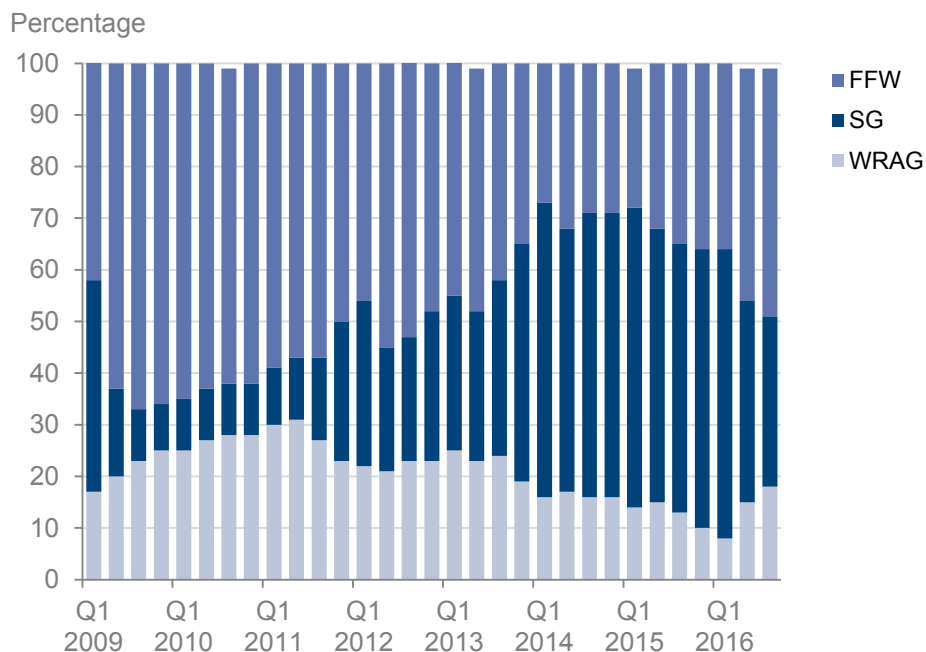
At the same time, SG, WRAG and FFW numbers have decreased for initial assessments due to fewer initial assessments being completed.

See accompanying [tables](#) for full data.

¹ The percentage shown excludes all IB cases still in progress

Assessment outcomes for ESA initial assessments

The proportion of Support Group outcomes continues to fall for ESA initial assessments



Note: assessment outcomes are shown by assessment date. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Main Findings

For the 96,300 ESA initial assessments cleared in the latest quarter to June 2016:

Support Group	33%	Down 6 percentage points since previous quarter
Work Related Activity Group	18%	Up 3 percentage points since previous quarter
Fit for Work	48%	Up 3 percentage points since previous quarter

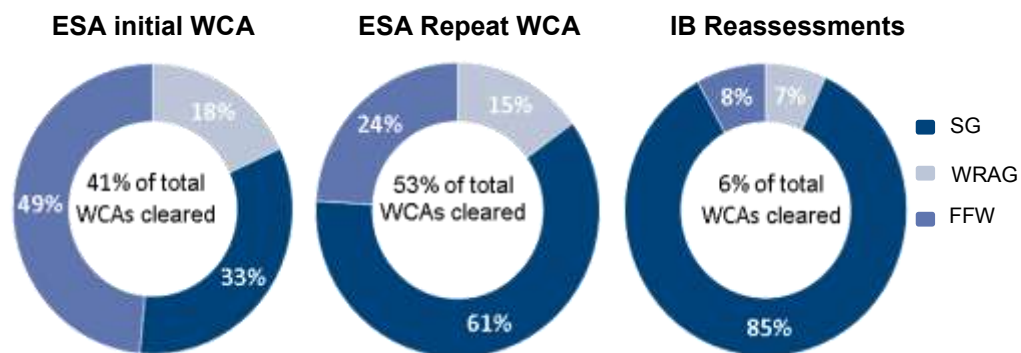
Outcomes of initial assessments entitled to ESA fell by 29,600 in the latest quarter to June 2016 to stand at 49,600; a fall of 3 percentage points to 52%.

Historically, SG outcomes have been gradually increasing, however they fell last quarter and continued to fall this quarter (to June 2016) from 56,900 to 32,100. This fall could partly be due to updated guidance on the application of risk introduced in January 2016, to restate the original policy intent and place the question of risk in the context of work-related activity (or potentially work).

The percentage assigned to WRAG and FFW this quarter have risen but actual numbers have dropped from 22,300 to 17,500 for WRAG and from 66,000 to 46,700 for FFW. This is due to the decreasing numbers of initial assessments completed.

See accompanying [tables](#) for full data.

ESA and IBR assessments: Cleared outcomes for the latest quarter show big differences across claim types



For assessments cleared in the latest quarter to June 2016, 41% were initial ESA claims, 53% were ESA repeat assessments and 6% were IB reassessments.

Repeat assessments account for 53% of total WCA clearances this quarter, up from 21% last quarter, due to them being re-introduced in December 2015 after a year of focussing on initial assessments.

The vast majority of IB reassessments and repeat assessments have Support Group outcomes - 85% and 61% respectively, in contrast to 33% for ESA initial assessments. This is due to IB claimants and existing ESA claimants already receiving benefit for an existing medical condition.

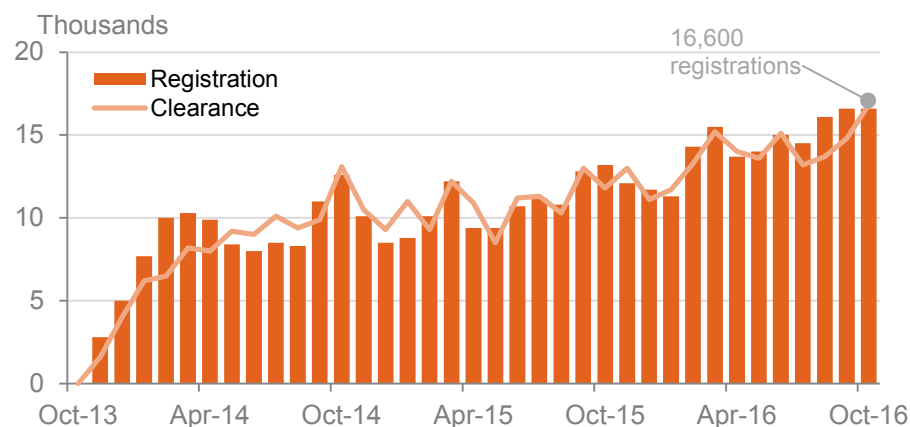
Initial ESA assessments have the highest FFW rate at 49%. This is expected as, unlike IB reassessments and repeat claims, these claimants don't have a previously known medical condition.

ESA-WCA Mandatory Reconsideration registrations, clearances and clearance times

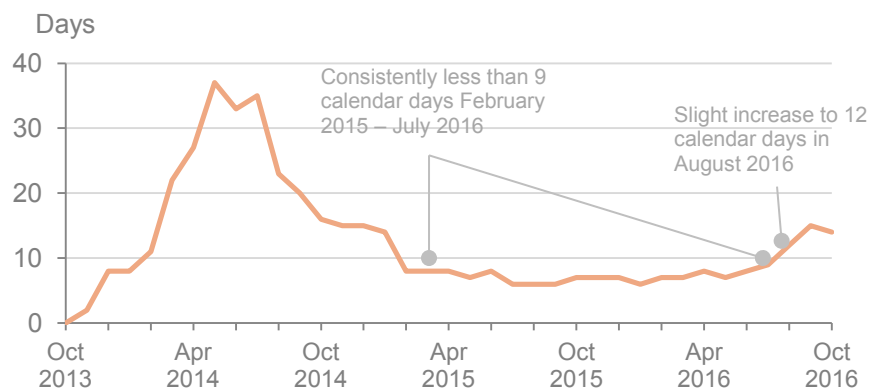
If a customer disagrees with their assessment decision they have the opportunity to raise a **Mandatory Reconsideration** and ask DWP to formally review the decision. The aim of MR is to resolve disputes as early as possible without the need for an appeal hearing.

See [methodology](#) note for a more detailed explanation.

Mandatory Reconsideration registrations have a general increasing trend, remaining stable in October 2016



Mandatory Reconsideration median monthly clearance times have been increasing since July 2016



Main Findings

Since the introduction of the MR process in October 2013 there has been an overall increasing trend in MR registration volumes and they remain stable in the latest month. 16,600 were registered in October 2016 compared to 13,200 for a year earlier in October 2015.

The chart shows rapid increases in registrations as MRs were introduced and thereafter, monthly numbers have increased gradually, fluctuating slightly each month. Since September 2015 there has been an overall increasing trend in the number of MRs registered.

When the MR process was first introduced, clearance numbers were low in comparison to registrations. However, since May 2014, clearance volumes have improved, as the process became established. Since September 2015 there is a general increasing trend in clearance volumes. In October 2016 clearance numbers surpassed registrations at 16,800.

In October 2016, the median monthly clearance time was 14 calendar days.

Initially, the median ESA-WCA MR clearance time increased steeply until May 2014, standing at 37 days, then decreased rapidly as the process became embedded. Between February 2015 and July 2016 the median clearance settled and didn't exceed 9 calendar days.

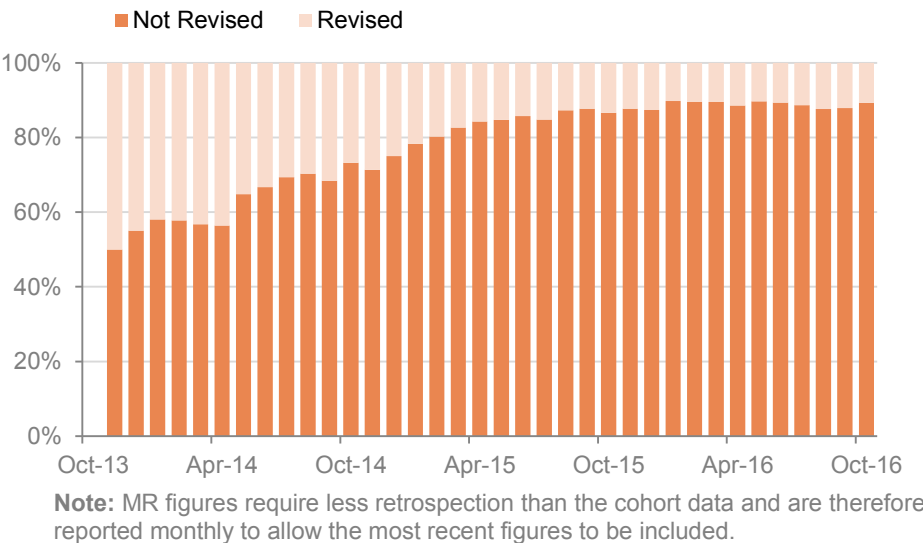
In August 2016, there was an increase in the clearance time to 12 calendar days, and it currently stands at 14 days in October 2016. This is in line with the steeper increase in MR registrations over this period.

See [methodology](#) note and page 9 for how median clearance times have been derived.

See accompanying [tables](#) for full data.

ESA-WCA Mandatory Reconsiderations outcomes

89% of assessment outcomes were not revised at Mandatory Reconsideration in the latest month, October 2016



Main Findings

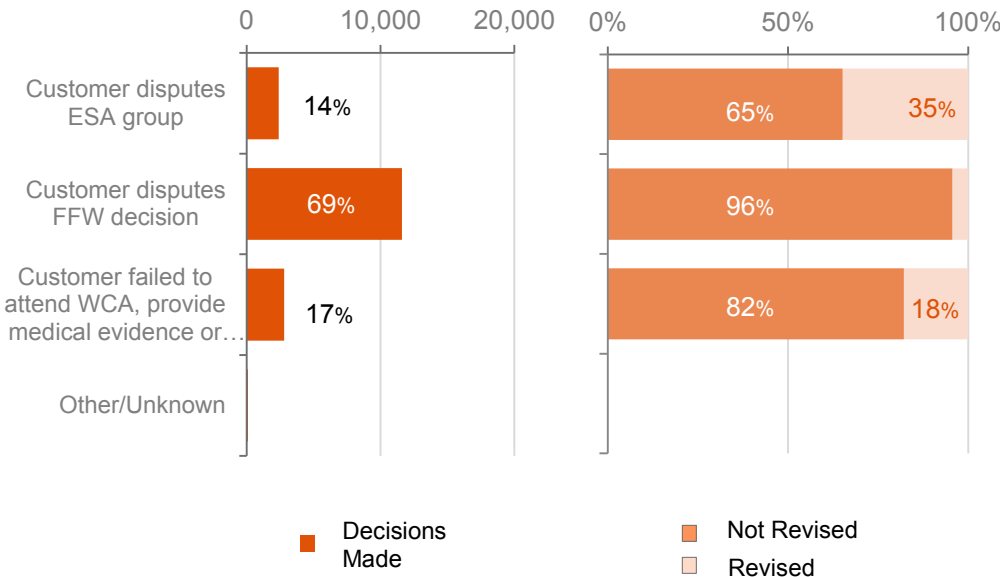
During the MR process, the DWP Decision Maker will review the evidence for the decision under dispute to either revise or not revise the decision.

Generally, since the MR process was introduced, there has been a decreasing trend in the number of decisions being revised each month. It settled at 10% in January 2016 and has fluctuated very slightly since. Latest figures for October 2016 show 11% were revised that month.

In October 2016, 89% of MRs were not revised; 14,900 decisions were not revised compared with 1,800 decisions revised.

See accompanying [tables](#) for further details.

Fit for Work disputes are the main cause of ESA-WCA Mandatory Reconsideration decisions in October 2016



The vast majority of MRs raised during the ESA-WCA process in October 2016 are due to FFW decisions. These types of MRs are less likely to be revised than the other categories.

In October 2016, 11,600 MR decisions (69%) were made on disputes about Fit for Work assessment outcomes. Only 4% of FFW disputes resulted in a revision in October.

In October 2016, 17% of MR decisions were made on disputes for reasons where the claimant has not followed the claim procedures correctly. These reasons include failing to return the initial questionnaire, failing to provide medical evidence or not attending their assessment. 18% of these disputes were revised this quarter.

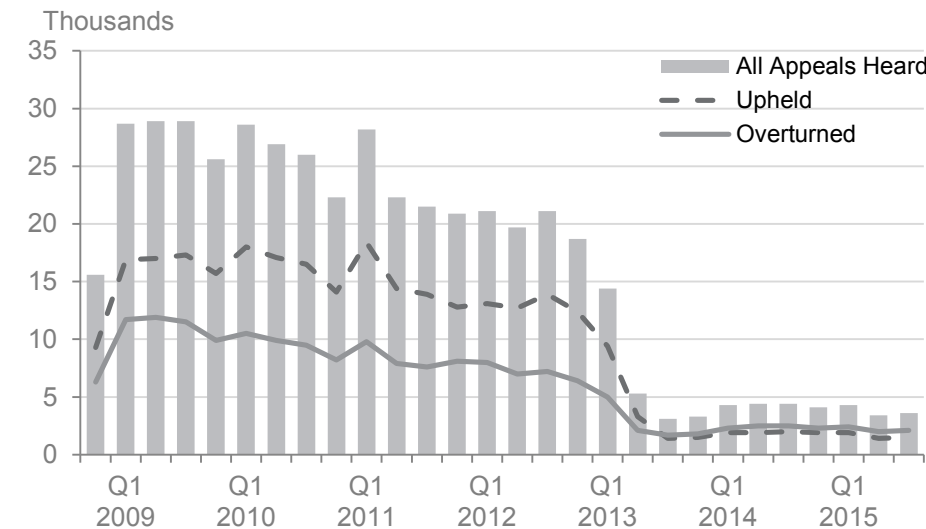
The breakdown of revised/not revised decisions per MR category for October 2016 is shown in the chart.

See accompanying [tables](#) for further details.

Appeals clearances and outcomes

Following an MR decision, the claimant can dispute the decision further by appealing to Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service where an official appeal hearing will take place to consider the decision evidence. At appeal, the decision under dispute will either be upheld or overturned.

The number of appeals heard on initial FFW decisions has risen slightly



Note: appeals outcomes are shown by appeal start date.

Main Findings

Being found FFW at assessment is the primary reason for claimants disputing a decision and therefore the main reason for appeal hearings. These figures focus on FFW appeals for initial assessments.

The total number of appeals heard on FFW decisions for initial assessments are very low over the last 18 months with little fluctuation.

The chart shows that in the latest quarter to September 2015, the number of appeals heard on FFW decisions for initial assessments has increased slightly from 3,400 to 3,600.

The low numbers of appeals over recent quarters may be due in part to the introduction of the MR process, although there could be other factors which have also contributed. The purpose of MRs is to give the customer an opportunity to present evidence against a decision for review without the need for formal appeal processes, therefore when the new system was introduced fewer appeals were expected.

Just over four in ten initial FFW decisions were upheld at appeal this quarter

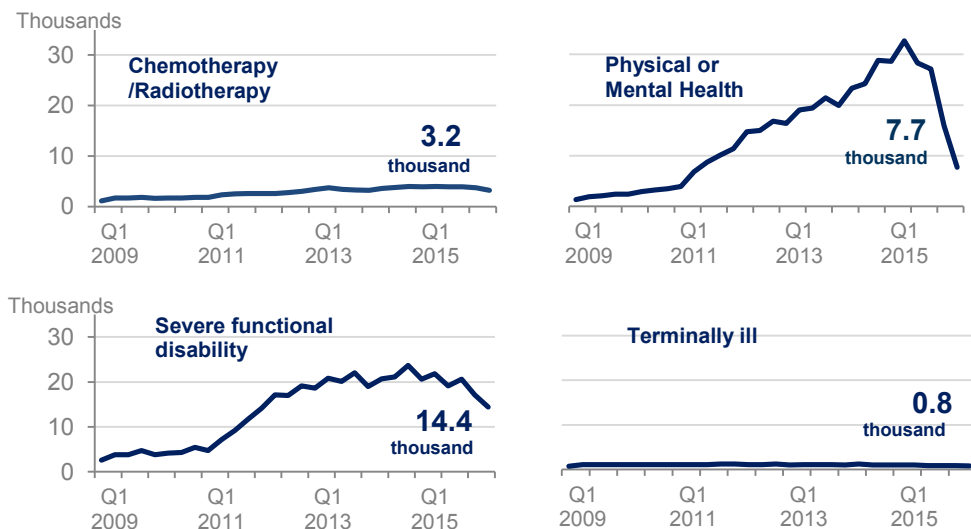


This quarter 42% of decisions under dispute were upheld at appeal. This is in line with outcome levels seen over the last couple of years, where the upheld rate for appeal decisions on FFW disputes for initial assessment is consistently between 41% and 46%.

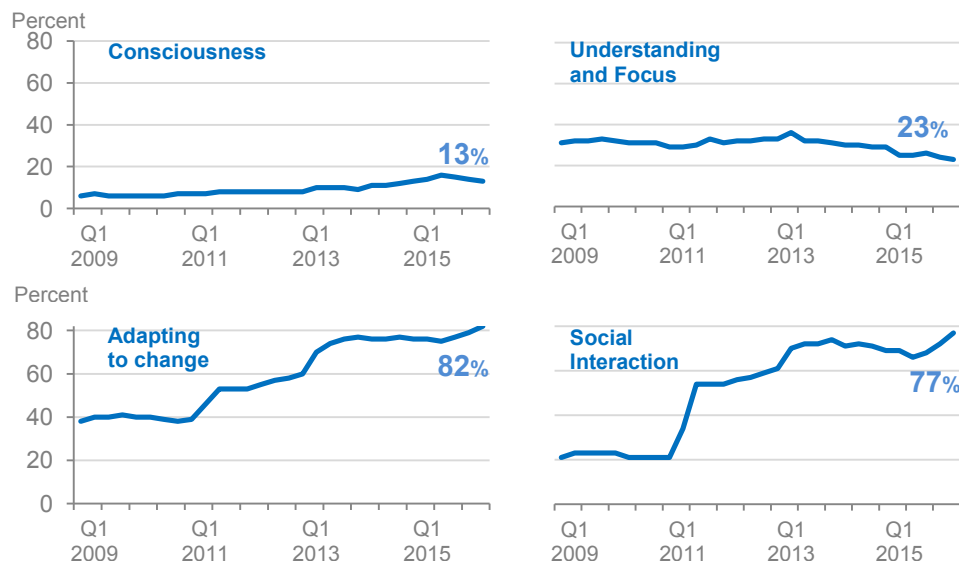
See accompanying [tables](#) for further details.

Health Conditions and ESA group allocation for initial assessments

‘Physical or mental health risk’ and ‘severe functional disability’ remain the main reasons for SG allocation this quarter



‘Adapting to change’ and ‘Social interaction’ remain the main reasons for WRAG allocation (with 15 points or more) this quarter



Main Findings

The charts to the left, show the main reasons for claimants who started their ESA claim in the latest quarter to March 2016 being assigned to the SG, is due to health conditions linked to ‘physical or mental health risk’ or ‘severe functional disability’.

These two leading categories made up 78% of all SG allocations this quarter.

There has been a decreasing trend in allocation to the Physical or Mental Health risk group since the start of the year. This is expected due to renewed guidance on how to treat conditions with work related risk factors. Conditions in this category that were previously only assigned to SG can now be assigned to WRAG. Volumes have dropped sharply from 15,900 to 7,700 this quarter.

Chemotherapy/radiotherapy and terminally ill numbers have fluctuated very slightly in the last year and again remain fairly stable this quarter.

The charts show the four main functional impairment categories in which claimants have scored points when assigned to the WRAG, scoring 15 points or more at initial assessment. Receiving 15 points or more is the main reason for assignment to the WRAG at initial assessment however; claimants can also be assigned to the WRAG at reconsideration or after appeal.

‘Adapting to change’ and ‘social interaction’ remain the most common reasons for WRAG allocations (with 15 points or more) this quarter, with 82% of claimants having an ‘adapting to change’ condition and 77% present in the ‘social interaction’ group. **Note** that claimants can have multiple functional impairments therefore appear in more than one category.

‘Understanding and focus’ affects 23% of WRAG claimants (with 15 points or more) this quarter. Other reasons for being assigned to the WRAG (with 15 points or more) which aren’t shown (Upper Limb, Sensory, Continence, and Lower Limb) are less common.

See accompanying [tables](#) for statistics on all reasons and health conditions assigned to the WRAG.

About these statistics

Key uses of the statistics include:

- Providing the evidence base for assessing the potential effect of changes, monitoring and evaluation of DWP policy
- Answering Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests and Forecasting benefit expenditure (in conjunction with expenditure statistics)
- Policy development and evaluation by local authorities and other welfare to work and pensions stakeholders and providers.

Terminology:

Registration - Claimant registers an application for a WCA, MR or appeal

Clearance - DWP decision maker has determined whether the claimant should or should not be entitled to claim ESA.

Mandatory reconsideration - Claimant wishes to dispute a decision made on their claim and requests DWP to reconsider the decision.

MR clearance time - The clearance time begins from the point the MR is raised on the DWP administrative system by the Benefit Centre as a valid MR, having considered whether they can initially change the decision in the light of any new information. The total clearance time therefore includes the time taken to transfer the case to the Dispute Resolution Team and the time taken for the decision maker to make a decision.

Repeat assessment - An existing claim that has been reassessed for ESA, as opposed to a new claim. A repeat assessment is the second or subsequent WCA undertaken on an existing, continuous ESA claim, usually between 3 and 24 months after the previous assessment. These claimants will have already been assessed as having a limited capability for work at their initial WCA and the repeat assessment will assess if their capability for work has changed.

MR outcomes:

- If a decision is categorised as **'Not Revised'** this means that the decision the claimant is questioning has not been changed.
- If the decision under dispute is classed as **'Revised – Allowed'** then the DM has changed the decision in the claimant's favour. So someone found FFW would be awarded ESA or someone put in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) claimant would be put in the Support Group (SG).
- If the decision is categorised as **'Revised – Disallowed'**, the DM, having reconsidered the decision, decides that the claimant is not entitled to ESA at all. This would apply where someone put in the WRAG seeks a revision to go into the SG but is then found FFW. These decisions are not at all common – less than 2% to date.
- If the decision is categorised as **'Withdrawn'**, the claimant has chosen to remove their MR request.

MR Decision categories:

There are many reasons that result in an ESA claimant raising a MR. For these statistics only those reasons relating to the WCA process have been included. The main reasons have been categorised and shown in the accompanying tables as follows;

- The primary reason for a claimant raising a MR is when they are found FFW following a medical assessment. All MRs relating to this topic are categorised as 'Customer disputes FFW decision'.
- The second category 'Customer failed to attend WCA, provide medical evidence or return questionnaire' incorporates reasons where the claimant has failed to follow the required claim procedures. The MR gives them an opportunity to explain why they didn't comply.
- The third category is 'Customer disputes ESA group' and contains MRs where the claimant is already assigned to an ESA group.

Experimental cohort statistics:

This quarter sees the addition of the MR statistics to the regular cohort data to build on the story of the end to end customer journey. The cohort MR statistics are less timely than the stand alone MR statistics due to time lags in the benefits data and assessment data they are linked to in the cohort process. Time lags are present to allow stages within the process sufficient time to complete. These statistics give a feel for the volumes flowing through each stage of the ESA WCA process. For robust figures on individual stages, please use the stand-alone figures within the published tables (not table 17).

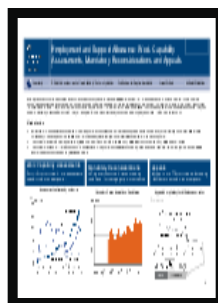
Official Statistics

ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments including mandatory reconsiderations and appeals: September 2016

From: [Department for Work and Pensions](#)
First published: 8 September 2016
Last updated: 10 October 2016, [see all updates](#)
Part of: [Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments](#)

Outcomes of Employment and Support Allowance Work Capability Assessments including mandatory reconsiderations and appeals information.

Documents



[Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments, Great Britain, quarterly official statistics bulletin](#)

PDF, 561KB, 11 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.
[Request an accessible format.](#)



[Data tables: Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments, Great Britain](#)

MS Excel Spreadsheet, 39.3MB

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

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Detail

This publication provides statistics on:

- the outcomes of completed Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessments
- claims still in progress
- claims closed before the Work Capability Assessment process is complete
- outcome of appeals up to June 2016

This release also includes:

- ESA Work Capability Assessment mandatory reconsideration registrations and outcomes
- new statistics on ESA Work Capability Assessment mandatory reconsideration clearance times to July 2016
- more detailed experimental cohort information

The publication covers both new claims and claims undergoing reassessment of incapacity benefits for ESA in Great Britain.

Read background information on these statistics in [ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessment policies and statements](#).

Find more about DWP statistics and contact details on the [Statistics at DWP page](#).

Find details of future DWP statistics releases in the [statistics release calendar](#).

Next release date: 8 December 2016.

Published:

8 September 2016

From:

Department for Work and Pensions

Updated:

10 October 2016

[+ full page history](#)

Part of:

Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments

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Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessments, Mandatory Reconsiderations and Appeals



Quarterly

ESA-WCA outcomes to March 2016 (MRs to July 2016)

Published: 8th September 2016

Great Britain

Official Statistics

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), which replaced incapacity benefits in October 2008, offers support for ill or disabled people. Claimants must participate in a Work Capability Assessment (WCA) to check eligibility and are placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) which offers support in preparing for work, or the Support Group (SG) for those unable to work. If they are not eligible to claim ESA they are found Fit for Work (FFW). Since October 2013, if claimants disagree with their assessment outcome, they can ask for a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR). If they still disagree with the MR outcome they can appeal to Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS).

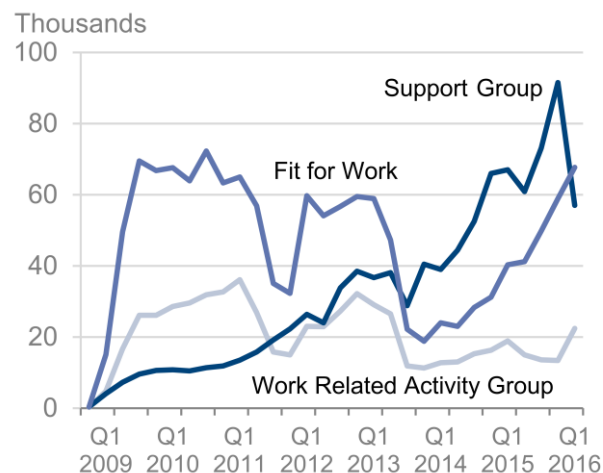
Main stories

- Outcomes of initial assessments completed in the latest quarter to March 16 show that numbers assigned to the SG have fallen by 17 percentage points to 57,000, WRAG increased by 7 percentage points to 22,400 and FFW increased by 10 percentage points to 67,700 compared with the previous quarter.
- The number of ESA-WCA MRs registered fell by 600 in the latest month to stand at 14,400 in July 2016. 89% of MRs cleared in July 2016 were not revised.
- The number of appeals for FFW decisions on initial assessments in the quarter to June 2015 continued its gradual downward trend over the last two years to stand at 2,800. 41% of the decisions appealed in July 2015 were upheld.

Work Capability Assessments

Support Group outcomes for initial assessments have dropped in the latest quarter

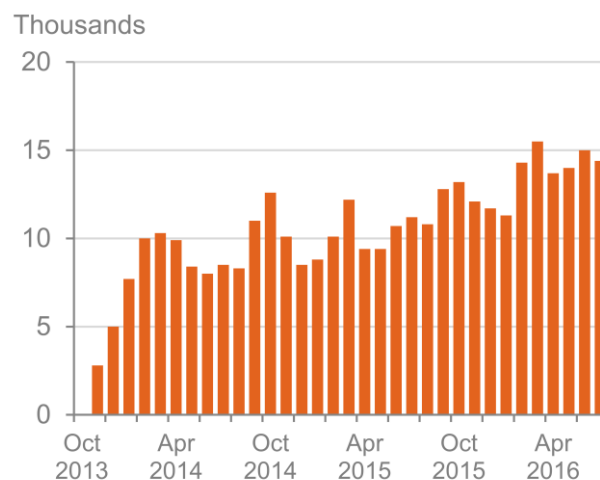
Assessments cleared by outcome



Mandatory Reconsiderations

MR registration numbers follow an increasing trend overall, fluctuating slightly in recent months.

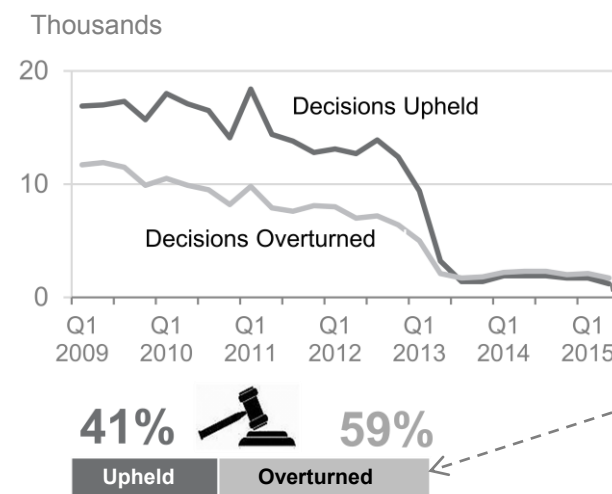
Mandatory Reconsiderations Registered



Appeals

Appeals on initial FFW outcomes are decreasing - 41% decisions upheld in the latest quarter.

Appeals Completed (for initial assessments)



At a glance

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Comments? We welcome feedback

Published: 8th September 2016

Next edition: December 2016

ISBN 978-1-7825-707-1

What you need to know

These statistics are released quarterly and cover ESA-WCA outcomes, MRs and appeals information sourced from:

- DWP's benefit administration datasets including MR data
- Healthcare provider assessment data
- HMCTS appeals data for completed appeals

In addition to the ESA-WCA official statistics contained in this release, we have developed some extra experimental ESA-WCA cohort figures by merging MR data with benefit, assessment and HMCTS data to allow us to track claimants through the stages of their ESA-WCA journey – see page 3.

To help visualise this we have also introduced a sankey diagram to display the volumes flowing through each stage of the process – see page 4.

These extra statistics have been labelled 'experimental' and users should be aware of possible methodology issues and data limitations whilst using them. See [methodology note](#) for more information.

Note: robust data for both the regular and experimental cohort information is only available for claims that began at least 9 months ago due to time required to complete assessments, record and process data accurately and align with other publications. **Hence, only claims made before the end of December 2015 and appeal outcomes up to June 2015 are included in these statistics.** Throughout the release, figures are presented by assessment start date, unless otherwise stated.

ESA Work Capability Assessment, Mandatory Reconsiderations and Appeals process

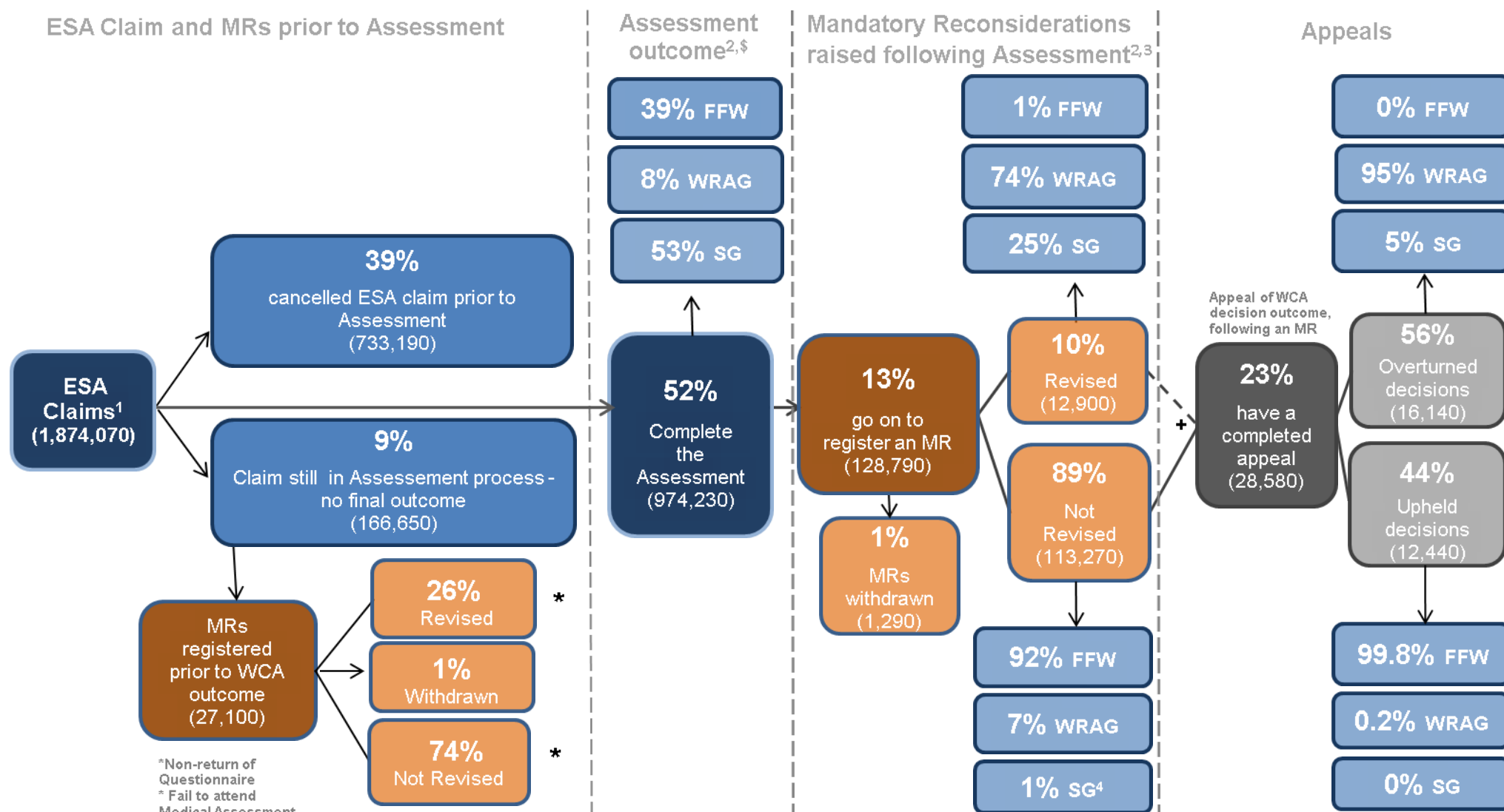
The following flow chart, containing experimental cohort data, shows the claim process to assess ESA entitlement. If claimants disagree with their assessment outcome they can ask the Jobcentre to review it by registering an MR. Following the MR outcome if the claimant still disagrees with the decision, they can appeal to Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service.

There are 3 types of Work Capability Assessments:

- Initial assessment – for new ESA claims
- Repeat assessment – existing claimants must undergo regular reviews; timescales depend on medical condition
- Incapacity Benefit reassessment (IBR); all IB claimants will eventually be reassessed for ESA

The figures presented in both the flow chart and sankey diagram cover all parts of the ESA-WCA process for claimants starting their ESA claim from October 2013 to December 2015 for **initial and repeat assessments only**.

Overview of the Work Capability Assessment, Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) and Appeals process for initial and repeat ESA claims starting October 2013 – December 2015 - (Experimental)



Footnotes:

1) All ESA initial and repeat claimants between October 2013 and December 2015* (the latest period that allows sufficient time for final outcomes to have been recorded). Totals may not sum due to rounding. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. FFW=Fit for Work, WRAG=Work Related Activity Group, SG=Support Group.

* A small number (around 10%) of pre-assessment MR registrations may go onto appeal their MR decision. + Some claimants may still not agree with the group they have been placed in and go on to appeal the MR decision. Less than 2% of all post ESA WCA appeals come from the revised grouping.

2) Statistics show the outcome based on healthcare provider recommendation - in some cases this may not always be the final outcome as outcomes are sometimes changed due to reconsideration. Due to data source recording limitations, this is the best proxy available. A proxy is also used to determine a small proportion of revised MR outcome results - where the final result is not captured.

3) A number of FFW cases have their case outcomes revised but still fall within FFW group as they still aren't awarded enough points to move to a different group.

4) A small amount of cases are 'Not Revised' and appear in SG. We are currently unaware of the exact reasoning for this. Therefore please treat these cases with caution.

§ Some cases may not yet have an outcome, or may have been withdrawn, cancelled, clerical cases - so WCA outcome percentages are derived using those with an actual FFW, WRAG or SG outcome.

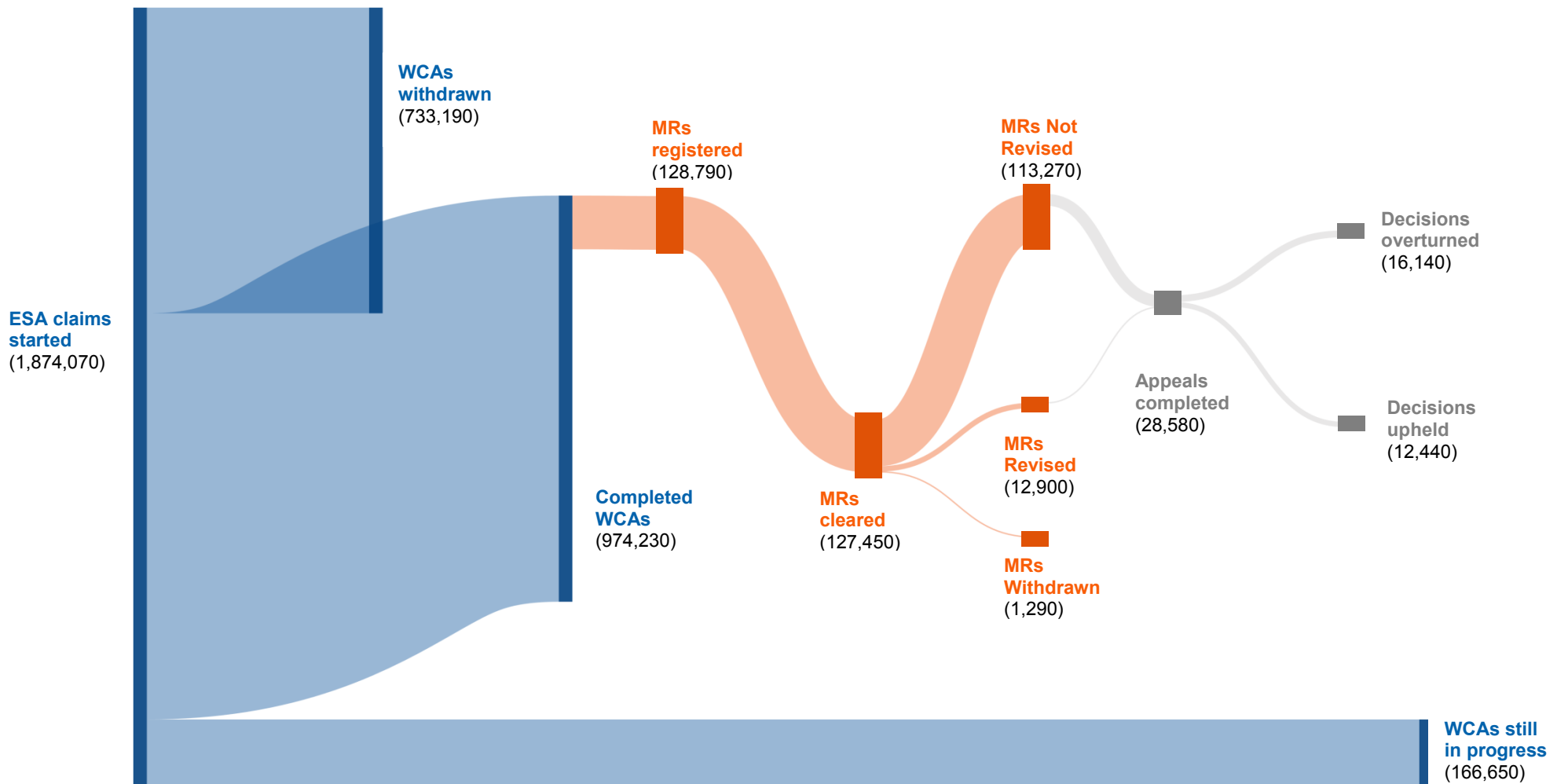
We only get information for completed appeals - so we don't know how many appeals are in progress.

Overview of the Work Capability Assessment, Mandatory Reconsideration and Appeals process

October 2013 – December 2015 cohort - (Experimental)

The following diagram gives a visual representation of proportions at each stage of the ESA Work Capability Assessment (WCA) process. The relative thickness of each segment represents the volume of cases flowing through each stage. For all ESA claims which started between October 2013 and December 2015:

- Around 52% have had a completed WCA (974,230 assessments). WCAs relating to the remaining claims are either still in progress or have been withdrawn/cancelled.
- 128,790 Mandatory Reconsiderations (MRs) have been registered in relation to the 974,230 completed WCAs.
 - The diagram shows that 99% of these MRs have been cleared, with the decision maker's original decision being revised 10% of the time.
- Almost one in four claimants who have registered an MR, then go on to have a completed appeal. Of this group (28,580 cases), the latest case decision was upheld 44% of the time.



ESA initial and repeat assessment outcomes, IB reassessments

The latest quarter to March 2016 shows 54% of initial assessment outcomes resulted in entitlement to ESA

Percentage of completed assessment caseload



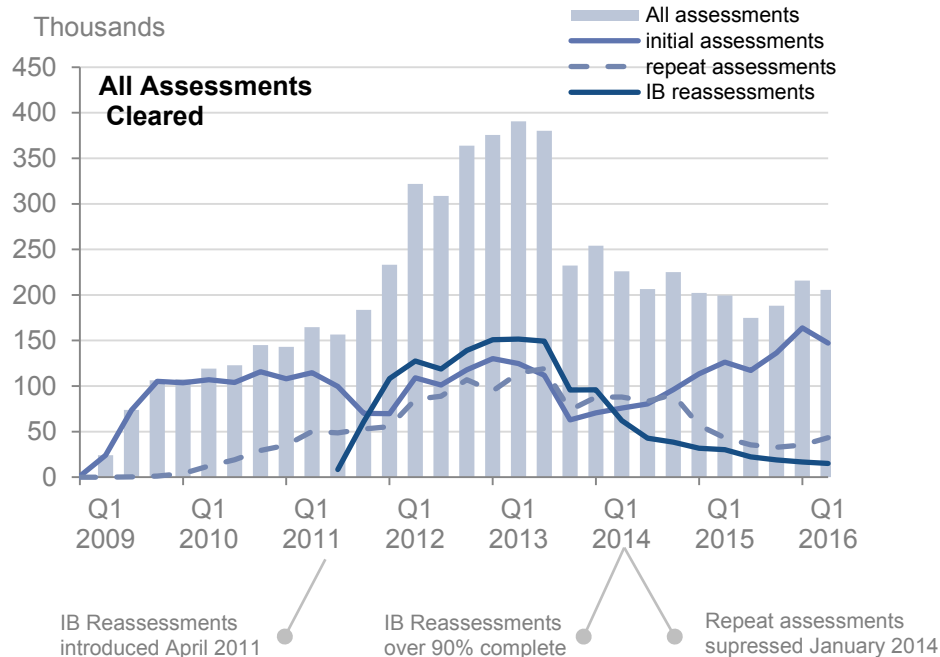
Main Findings

From April 2009 to October 2011 there was a downward trend in claimants assessed as FFW and an upward trend in eligibility for ESA. In the quarter to January 2012 to March 2012 there was an increase in claimants assessed as FFW and a decrease in eligibility for ESA.

Outcomes of initial assessments entitled to ESA fell by 25,600 in the latest quarter to March 2016 to stand at 79,400. A fall of 10 percentage points to 54%.

Outcomes found FFW continued to increase by 8,800 to 79,400 in the latest quarter, a rise of 10 percentage points to 46%.

72 % of assessments cleared in the latest quarter were for ESA initial assessments



In the latest quarter to March 2016 the majority of assessments cleared were for ESA initial claims.

At the end of 2013, IB reassessment and repeat assessment volumes dropped significantly. The majority of IB reassessments were completed by that point and the focus was moved from assessing existing claims (including repeat assessments) to clearing new claims. IB reassessments are now 99% complete.

ESA repeat assessment volumes are expected to increase in future quarters as these were re-introduced in December 2015, following a suppression of 24 months to concentrate on new claim clearance.

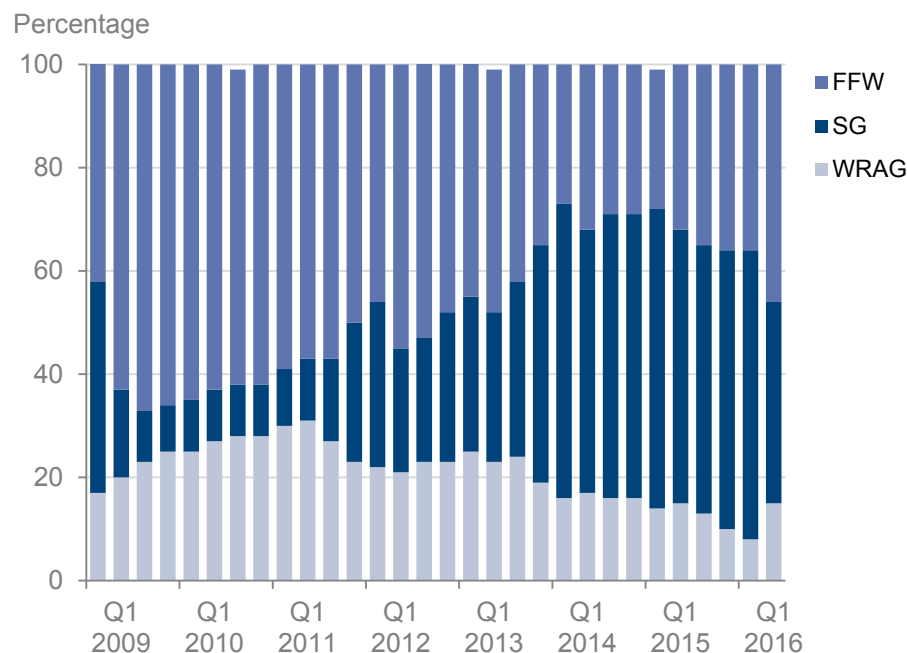
The effects of this have started to be seen where figures are tabled by assessment start date. For example in the latest quarter to December 2015 repeat assessments increased by 127,300 compared with only 36,100 for the same period a year earlier.

The focus of this release will therefore be on ESA initial assessments.

See accompanying [tables](#) for full data.

Assessment outcomes for ESA initial assessments

Support Group outcomes have fallen for ESA initial assessments, whereas FFW and WRAG have increased



Main Findings

For the 147,100 ESA initial assessments cleared in the latest quarter to March 2016:

Support Group 39%  Down 17 percentage points since previous quarter

Work Related Activity Group 15%  Up 7 percentage point since previous quarter

Fit for Work 46%  Up 10 percentage points since previous quarter

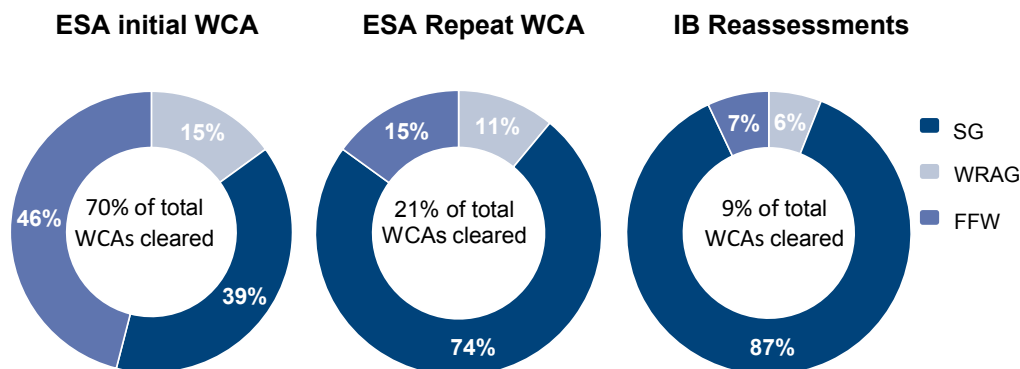
SG outcomes have gradually been increasing but fell from 91,500 to 57,000 in the quarter to March 2016.

WRAG outcomes have risen from 13,400 to 22,400 and FFW has risen from 58,900 to 67,700.

See accompanying [tables](#) for full data.

Note: assessment outcomes are shown by assessment date. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

ESA and IBR assessments: Cleared outcomes in the latest quarter show a big difference in outcomes between claim types



The majority of all assessments cleared in the latest quarter to March 2016 show 70% have been for initial ESA claims, 21% for ESA repeat assessments and 9% IB reassessments.

The vast majority of IB reassessments and repeat assessments have Support Group outcomes - 87% and 74% respectively, in contrast to 39% for ESA initial assessments. This is due to IB claimants and existing ESA claimants already receiving benefit for an existing medical condition.

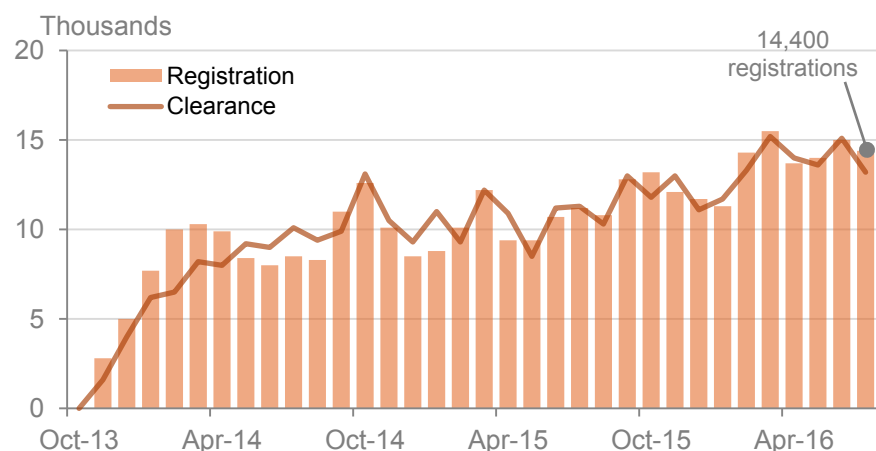
Initial ESA assessments have the highest FFW rate at 46%. This is expected as, unlike IB reassessments and repeat claims, these claimants don't have a previously known medical condition.

ESA-WCA Mandatory Reconsideration Registrations, clearances and clearance times

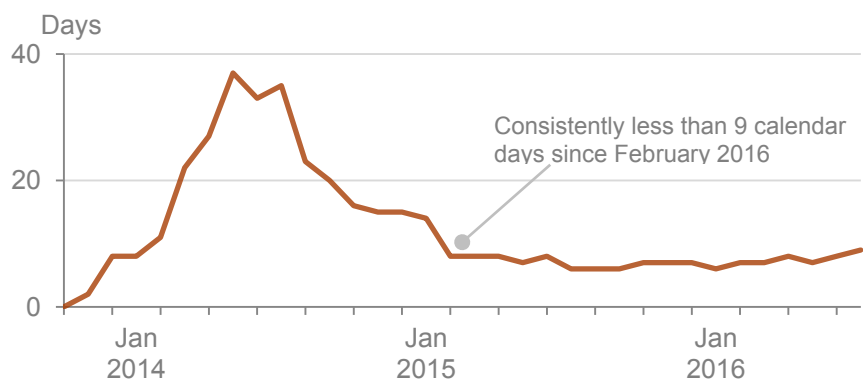
If a customer disagrees with their assessment decision they have the opportunity to raise a **Mandatory Reconsideration** and ask DWP to formally review the decision. The aim of MR is to resolve disputes as early as possible without the need for an appeal hearing.

See [methodology](#) note for a more detailed explanation.

Mandatory Reconsideration registrations have a general increasing trend but dropped slightly in July 2016



Mandatory Reconsideration median monthly clearance times remains 9 calendar days or less



Main Findings

Since the introduction of the MR process in October 2013 there has been an overall increasing trend in MR registration volumes. 14,400 were registered in July 2016 compared to 11,200 for a year earlier in July 2015.

The chart shows a large increase in registrations at the start of 2014 and monthly numbers increasing gradually since, fluctuating slightly each month. Since September 2015 there has been an overall increasing trend in the number of MRs registered.

At the start of the process, clearance numbers were low in comparison to registrations, however from May 2014 clearance volumes improved, probably as the process became established. Since September 2015 there is a general increasing trend in clearance volumes.

In July 2016, the median monthly clearance time was 9 calendar days.

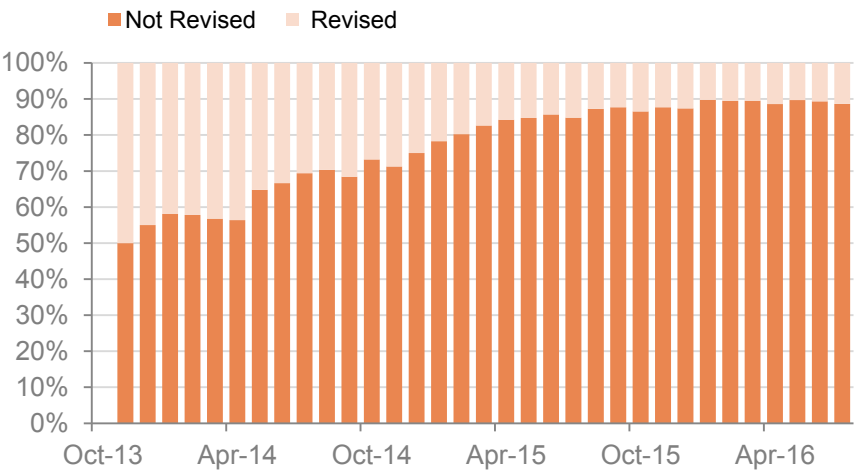
The median ESA-WCA MR clearance time initially increased steeply until May 2014 at to stand at 37 days, but since then has decreased. Since February 2015 the median clearance time has fluctuated only slightly and has not exceeded 9 calendar days.

See [methodology](#) note and page 9 for how median clearance times have been derived.

See accompanying [tables](#) for full data.

ESA-WCA Mandatory Reconsiderations outcomes

89% of assessment outcomes were not revised at Mandatory Reconsideration in the latest month, July 2016



Note: MR figures require less retrospection than the cohort data and are therefore reported monthly to allow the most recent figures to be included.

Main Findings

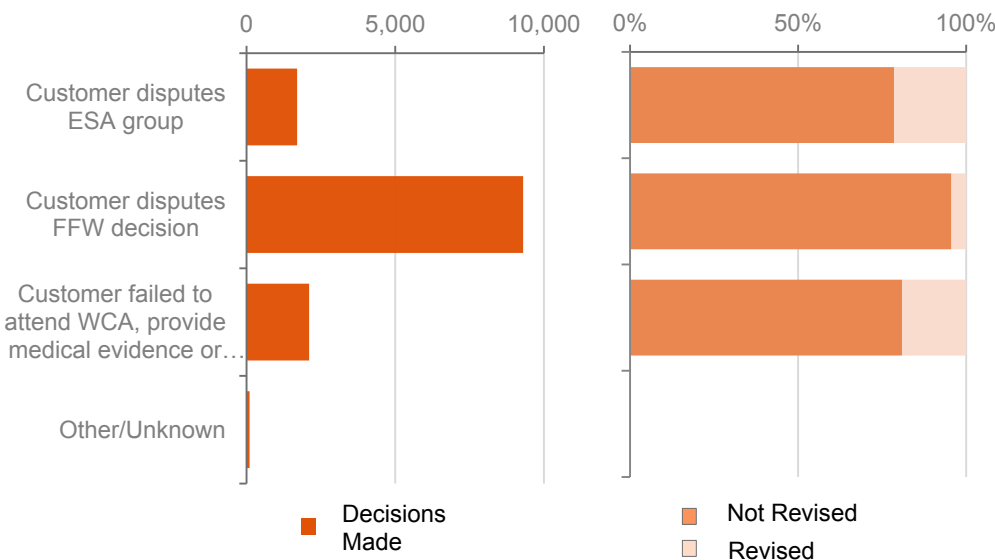
During the MR process, the DWP Decision Maker will review the evidence for the decision under dispute to either revise or not revise the decision.

Since the MR process was introduced, there has been a decreasing trend in the number of decisions being revised each month.

In July 2016 there were 89% of MRs not revised, 1,400 decisions revised compared to 11,700 decisions not revised.

See accompanying [tables](#) for further details.

Fit for Work disputes are the main cause of ESA-WCA Mandatory Reconsideration decisions in July 2016



The vast majority of MRs raised during the ESA WCA process in July 2016 are down to FFW decisions. These types of MRs are less likely to be revised than the other categories.

In July 2016 13,200 (70%) MR decisions were made on disputes about Fit for Work assessment outcomes. Only 4% of FFW disputes resulted in a revision in July.

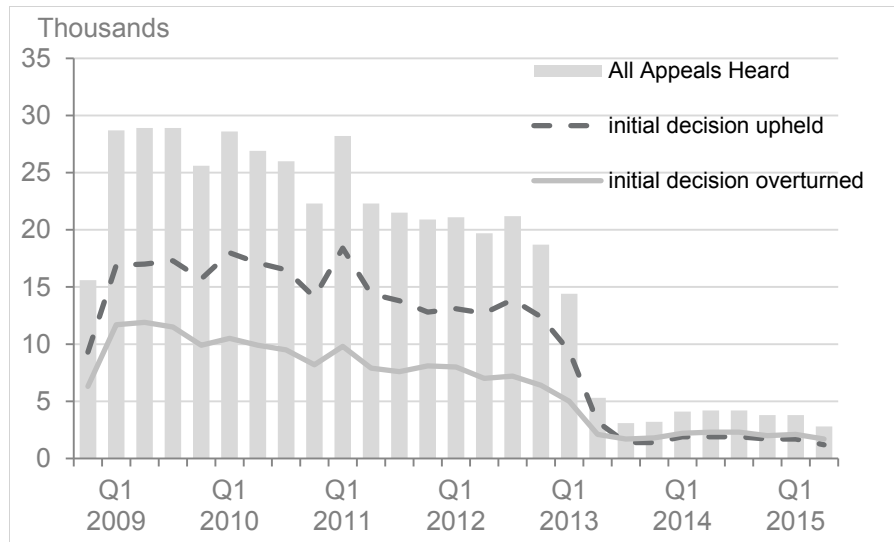
In July 2016 (16%) MR decisions were made on disputes for reasons where the claimant has not followed the claim procedures correctly. These reasons include failing to return the initial questionnaire, failing to provide medical evidence or not attending their assessment. 19% of these disputes were revised this quarter.

The breakdown of revised/not revised decisions per MR category in July is shown in the chart. See accompanying [tables](#) for further details.

Appeals clearances and outcomes

Following an MR decision, the claimant can dispute the decision further by appealing to Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service where an official appeal hearing will take place to consider the decision evidence. At appeal, the decision under dispute will either be upheld or overturned.

Number of appeals heard on initial FFW decisions continues to fall



Note: appeals outcomes are shown by appeal start date.

Main Findings

Being found FFW at assessment is the primary reason for claimants disputing a decision and therefore the main reason for appeal hearings. These figures focus on FFW appeals for initial assessments.

The total numbers of appeals heard on FFW decisions for initial assessments shows a steadily decreasing trend and very low numbers over the last 18 months with little fluctuation.

The chart shows that this quarter, the number of appeals heard on FFW decisions for initial assessments continues the decreasing trend. 2,800 claims were heard this quarter, a fall of 1,000 when compared to the previous quarter.

The low numbers of appeals over recent quarters may be due in part to the introduction of the MR process, although there could be other factors which have also contributed to their decline. The purpose of MRs is to give the customer an opportunity to present evidence against a decision for review without the need for formal appeal processes, therefore when the new system was introduced fewer appeals were expected.

Almost four in ten initial FFW decisions were upheld at appeal this quarter

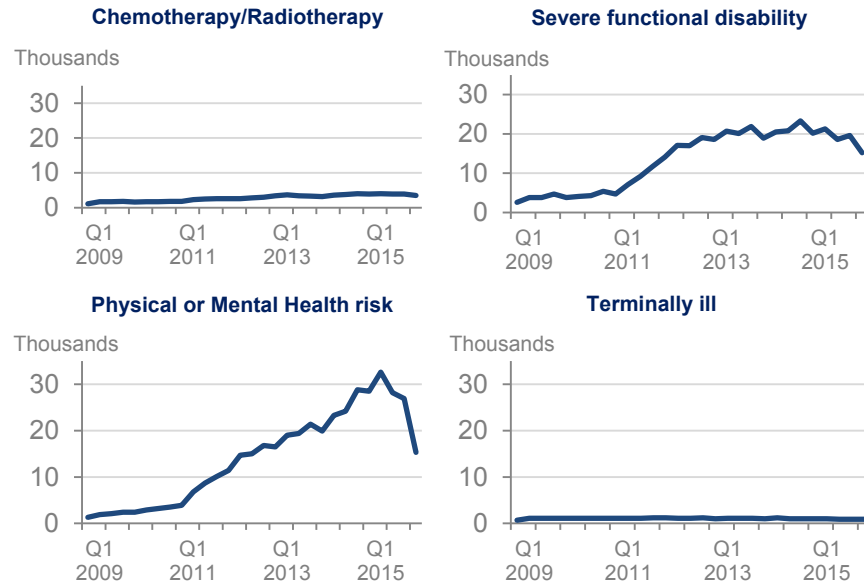


This quarter 41% of decisions under dispute were upheld at appeal. This continues the trend of slightly over half of appeal decisions on FFW disputes for initial assessment being overturned.

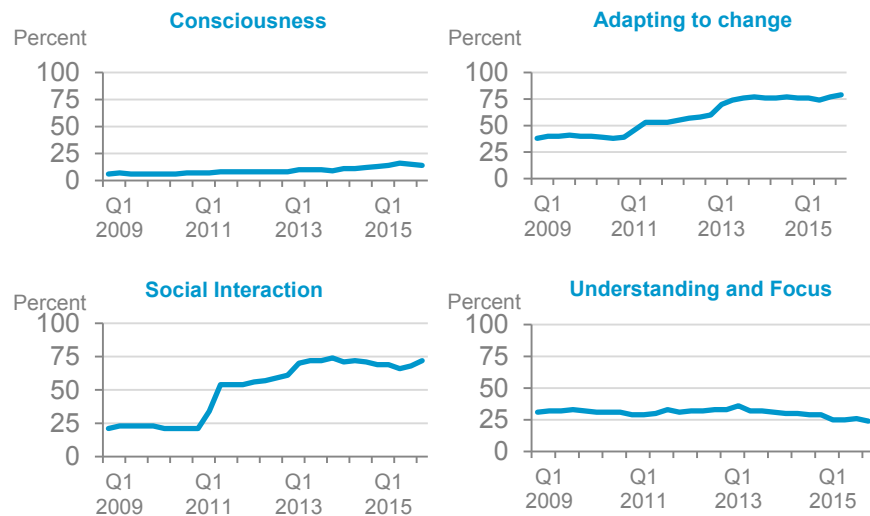
See accompanying [tables](#) for further details.

Health Conditions and ESA group allocation for initial assessments

‘Physical or mental health risk’ and ‘severe functional disability’ remain the main reasons for SG allocation this quarter



‘Adapting to change’ and ‘Social interaction’ remain the main reasons for WRAG allocation (with 15 points or more) this quarter



Main Findings

The charts to the left, show the main reasons for claimants who started their ESA claim in the latest quarter to December 2015 being assigned to the SG, is due to health conditions linked to ‘physical or mental health risk’ or ‘severe functional disability’.

These categories make up 82% of all SG allocations.

Pregnancy risk continues to be the smallest group; this quarter again sees less than 5% being assigned to the SG for this reason (not on charts due to very small numbers). There has been a decrease in allocation to the Physical or Mental Health risk group since the turn of the year.

Chemotherapy/radiotherapy and terminally ill numbers have fluctuated very slightly in the last year and the terminally ill figures remain stable at 900 (2%) and chemotherapy/radiotherapy has risen 3 percentage points to 3,500.

The charts show the four main functional impairment categories in which claimants have scored points when assigned to the WRAG, scoring 15 points or more at initial assessment. Receiving 15 points or more is the main reason for assignment to the WRAG at initial assessment however; claimants can also be assigned to the WRAG at reconsideration or after appeal.

‘Adapting to change’ and ‘social interaction’ remain the most common reasons for WRAG allocations (with 15 points or more), with 79% of claimants having an ‘adapting to change’ condition and 72% present in the ‘social interaction’ group.

Note that claimants can have multiple functional impairments therefore appear in more than one category.

‘Understanding and focus’ affects 24% of WRAG claimants (with 15 points or more) this quarter. Other reasons for being assigned to the WRAG (with 15 points or more) which aren’t shown (Upper Limb, Sensory, Continence, and Lower Limb) are less common.

See accompanying [tables](#) for statistics on all reasons and health conditions assigned to the WRAG.

About these statistics

Key uses of the statistics include:

- Providing the evidence base for assessing the potential effect of changes, monitoring and evaluation of DWP policy
- Answering Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests and Forecasting benefit expenditure (in conjunction with expenditure statistics)
- Policy development and evaluation by local authorities and other welfare to work and pensions stakeholders and providers.

Terminology:

Registration - Claimant registers an application for a WCA, MR or appeal

Clearance - DWP decision maker has determined whether the claimant should or should not be entitled to claim ESA.

Mandatory reconsideration - Claimant wishes to dispute a decision made on their claim and requests DWP to reconsider the decision.

MR clearance time - The clearance time begins from the point the MR is raised on the DWP administrative system by the Benefit Centre as a valid MR, having considered whether they can initially change the decision in the light of any new information. The total clearance time therefore includes the time taken to transfer the case to the Dispute Resolution Team and the time taken for the decision maker to make a decision.

Reassessment - An existing claim that has been reassessed for ESA, as opposed to a new claim.

MR outcomes:

- If a decision is categorised as **'Not Revised'** this means that the decision the claimant is questioning has not been changed.
- If the decision under dispute is classed as **'Revised – Allowed'** then the DM has changed the decision in the claimant's favour. So someone found FFW would be awarded ESA or someone put in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) claimant would be put in the Support Group (SG).
- If the decision is categorised as **'Revised – Disallowed'**, the DM, having reconsidered the decision, decides that the claimant is not entitled to ESA at all. This would apply where someone put in the WRAG seeks a revision to go into the SG but is then found FFW. These decisions are not at all common – less than 2% to date.
- If the decision is categorised as **'Withdrawn'**, the claimant has chosen to remove their MR request.

MR Decision categories:

There are many reasons that result in an ESA claimant raising a MR. For these statistics only those reasons relating to the WCA process have been included. The main reasons have been categorised and shown in the accompanying tables as follows;

- The primary reason for a claimant raising a MR is when they are found FFW following a medical assessment. All MRs relating to this topic are categorised as 'Customer disputes FFW decision'.
- The second category 'Customer failed to attend WCA, provide medical evidence or return questionnaire' incorporates reasons where the claimant has failed to follow the required claim procedures. The MR gives them an opportunity to explain why they didn't comply.
- The third category is 'Customer disputes ESA group' and contains MRs where the claimant is already assigned to an ESA group.

Experimental cohort statistics:

This quarter sees the addition of the MR statistics to the regular cohort data to build on the story of the end to end customer journey. The cohort MR statistics are less timely than the stand alone MR statistics due to time lags in the benefits data and assessment data they are linked to in the cohort process. Time lags are present to allow stages within the process sufficient time to complete. These statistics give a feel for the volumes flowing through each stage of the ESA WCA process. For robust figures on individual stages, please use the stand-alone figures within the published tables (not table 17).

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Official Statistics

ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments: claims made to Sep 2015 and appeals to Mar 2016

From: [Department for Work and Pensions](#)
First published: 6 July 2016
Part of: [Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments](#)

Outcomes of Work Capability Assessments for Employment and Support Allowance claims made to September 2015 and appeal outcomes to March 2016.

Documents



[Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments, Great Britain, quarterly official statistics bulletin](#)

PDF, 812KB, 23 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.
[Request an accessible format.](#)



[Data tables: Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments, Great Britain](#)

MS Excel Spreadsheet, 4.55MB

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Detail

This publication provides statistics on:

- the outcomes of completed Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessments
- claims still in progress
- claims closed before the Work Capability Assessment process is complete
- outcome of appeals up to March 2016

The publication covers both new claims and claims undergoing reassessment of incapacity benefits for ESA in Great Britain.

Read background information on these statistics in [ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessment policies and statements](#).

Find more about DWP statistics and contact details on the [Statistics at DWP page](#).

Find details of future DWP statistics releases in the [statistics release calendar](#).

The next release of these statistics will include ESA Work Capability Assessment mandatory reconsideration registrations and outcomes. It will also include new statistics on ESA Work Capability Assessment mandatory reconsideration clearance times to July 2016 and more detailed cohort information.

Next release date: To be confirmed.

Published:

6 July 2016

From:

Department for Work and Pensions

Part of:

Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments

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Department
for Work &
Pensions

Employment and Support Allowance: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments, Great Britain

Quarterly official statistics bulletin

6th July 2016

Executive Summary

This publication's focus is on claims started in July 2015 to September 2015 and appeals outcomes to March 2016. Figures in this issue cannot reflect the final outcomes, because they include cases still undergoing assessment, that don't yet have a final outcome recorded.

For this reason it is likely that the statistics underestimate the proportion of claimants who will ultimately be awarded the benefit by greater amounts for more recent periods.

Headline figures - New Claims to ESA (i.e. not re-assessment of incapacity benefits):

The following numbers give the most consistent measure of the outcomes of completed assessments, by excluding outcomes after appeals for new claims for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

Outcomes of completed initial assessments for claims started from July to September 2015 show:

- **53** per cent of claimants have an outcome i.e. decisions have been made on their claims;
- **34** per cent of claimants had their claim closed before having a face to face assessment; and
- **13** per cent of claimants do not yet have an outcome i.e. they are at some point in the assessment process;

Claimants with an outcome for their claim can be broken down as follows*:

- **65** per cent of claimants were entitled to the benefit.
- **35** per cent of claimants were assessed as Fit for Work (FFW) and are no longer eligible for Employment and Support Allowance

Important notes

The data is not available until at least 9 months in arrears because of time needed to:

- enable processing of data sourced from inside the department and outside it from Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) and Maximus Healthcare; and
- allow time for all decisions to be made and recorded – the assessment phase is usually 13 weeks, but in some cases it will take longer for a decision to be reached.
- align with the publication of Quarterly Tribunals Statistics published by the Ministry of Justice.

Thus only claims made before end September 2015 are included. Data is available for appeal outcomes to March 2016.

Since January 2014 and following alignment with the Ministry of Justice tribunals publication, this publication has changed from reporting statistics on the latest 'offset quarter' to reporting statistics for the latest 'quarter' as this is the most recent data available.

If you have any comments or requests regarding this publication, please contact DWP via stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk, or join the "Welfare and Benefit Statistics" community at <http://www.statsusernet.org.uk>.

* Totals may not sum due to rounding.

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Results

1 Please note that in interpreting the figures the following could be a contribution to the statistics and allowance must be made for this:-

- changes in regulations since the introduction of this new benefit;
- a combination of changes to the Work Capability Assessment, including implementation of the Department-led review and others following implementation of the recommendations from independent reviews of the Work Capability Assessment;
- not all claimants in more recent periods have had their appeals heard;
- trends in decisions before appeals have an impact on the appeals process;
- data for the most recent periods within this report may not be directly comparable with earlier periods and reports as more cases are still in progress. Of claims started in the latest period from July 2015 to September 2015, 13 per cent of the total caseload do not yet have an outcome and are at some point in the assessment process. In the previous publication for March 2016¹, 14 per cent of the caseload had claims still in progress for the period from April 2015 to June 2015, a drop from the December 2015² release with 24 per cent of claims still in progress (claims started from January 2015 to March 2015); It is expected that additional cases from any original caseload would clear the ESA assessment process in subsequent periods.
- cases where decisions are made earlier tend to be more likely to be entitled to ESA than not;
- since October 2013, claimants who wish to dispute a decision – including a decision which is based on the outcome of a Work Capability Assessment – are required to ask DWP to reconsider and revise the decision. This is called a ‘mandatory reconsideration’. An appeal cannot be lodged with HMCTS until the mandatory reconsideration process has been undertaken and completed. Statistics on numbers and outcomes of mandatory reconsiderations were published for the first time in June 2016³, but will be combined in this release going forward;
- there may also be other undetected factors at work.

¹ Published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-claims-made-to-Jun-2015-and-appeals-to-Dec-2015>

² Published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-claims-made-to-mar-2015-and-appeals-to-sep-2015>

³ Published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-work-capability-assessment-mandatory-reconsiderations-data-to-april-2016>

1.1 New Claims for Employment and Support Allowance

The narrative in this section, like the supporting tables, largely follows the chronological order of a claim: completed initial assessments.

1.1.1 Initial outcomes – Table 1a

The initial assessment outcomes relate to the claimant's first assessment before appeal and may include cases that will have been revised following reconsideration. These results are only for cases where the assessment process has been completed, and therefore exclude claims closed before assessment or those referrals which do not yet have an outcome and are still at some stage in the assessment process. The following results are for cohorts based on the date claims were started.

Table 1a in the supplementary tables on outcomes of completed initial assessments of claims started in the period from July 2015 to September 2015 shows:

- 65 per cent of claimants were entitled to Employment and Support Allowance. Within this –
 - 11 per cent of claimants were placed in the Work Related Activity Group, and
 - 54 per cent of claimants were placed in the Support Group;
- 35 per cent of claimants were assessed as Fit for Work.

The proportion entitled to Employment and Support Allowance has dropped by 3 percentage points from 68 to 65 since the last quarter. The proportion assigned to the Work Related Activity Group has increased slightly from 10 to 11 percentage points and the proportion assigned to the Support Group has dropped by 3 percentage points from 57 to 54. However, this comparison should be treated with caution as the exclusion of cases which are still in progress at some point in the assessment progress would be expected to have more impact on recent months.

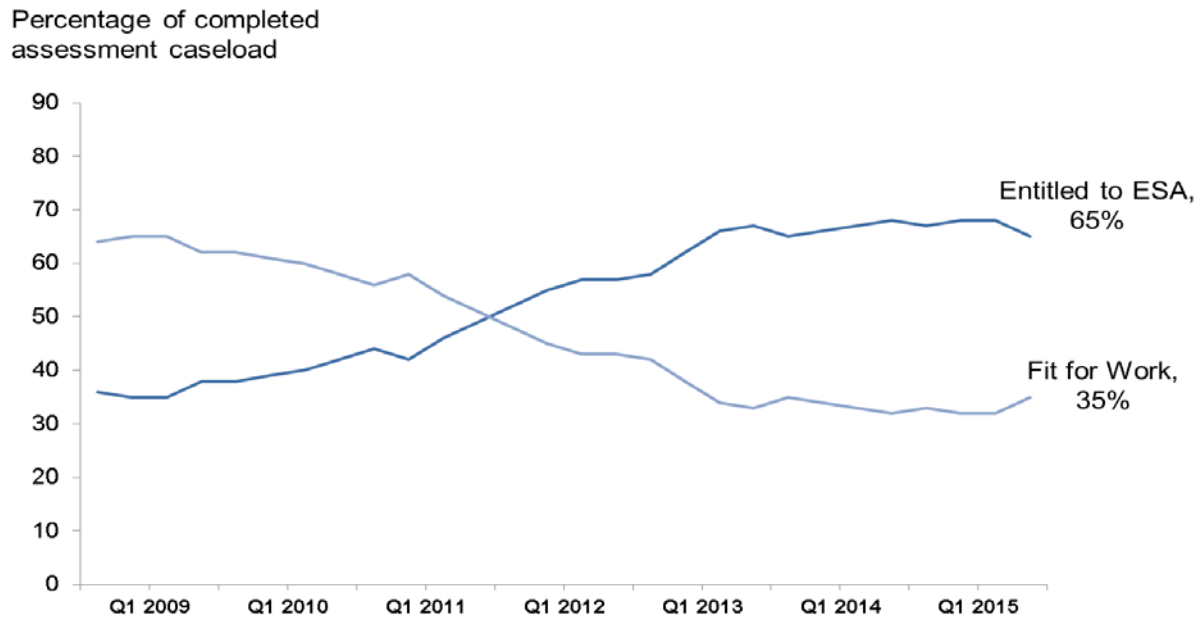
Figure 1 below shows the time series of Table 1a where:

There has been an apparent downward trend in claimants assessed as Fit for Work and an upward trend in eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance. The downward trend of proportions assessed as Fit for Work has slowed down in recent quarters and proportions rose by 3 percentage points in the latest quarter from 32 to 35 and the proportion entitled to ESA increased by 3 percentage points to 65. However, please see note at [paragraph \[1\]](#) above for explanation of potential causes. In particular, of claims started in the latest period from July 2015 to September 2015, 13 per cent of the total caseload were still in progress at some point in the assessment process and cases where decisions are made earlier tend to be more likely to be entitled to ESA.

Since October 2013, claimants who wish to dispute a decision – including a decision which is based on the outcome of a Work Capability Assessment – are required to ask DWP to reconsider and revise the decision, prior to appeal. This is called a 'mandatory reconsideration'.

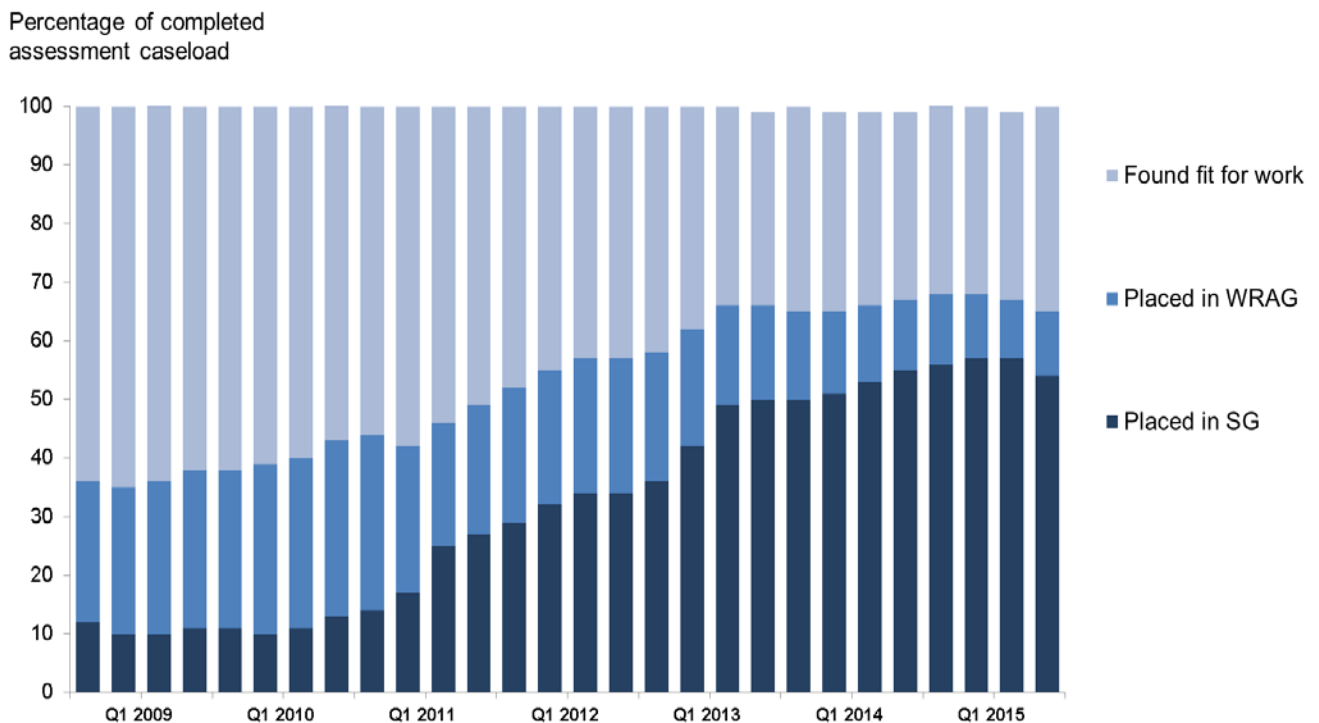
The Department's first set of statistics on mandatory reconsiderations can be accessed [here](#). From the next publication in September onwards, these statistics will be incorporated within this release.

Figure 1: Outcome of initial functional assessment by date of claim start, Great Britain



See note at [paragraph \[1\]](#) above for explanation of potential causes for most recent periods.

Figure 1a: Outcome of initial functional assessment by date of claim start, Great Britain



See note at [paragraph \[1\]](#) above for explanation of potential causes for most recent periods.

1.1.2 Status of claims closed before assessment and those still in progress – Table 1a

Overall 47 per cent of total claims in the latest quarter (between July 2015 and September 2015) have either not reached or completed the Work Capability Assessment process, within this 34 per cent were closed before a decision was made and 13 per cent were still in progress. This is 5 percentage points less than the last publication, where 52 per cent had either not reached or completed the process between April 2015 and June 2015 (March 2016 publication). It is difficult for anything conclusive to be said about the destinations of such cases.

1.1.3 Initial outcomes by assessment date – Table 2a

The following results are for cohorts based on the date assessments were completed rather than when claims were started. This removes one inconsistency in the time series of data, as no period has outstanding assessments.

Table 2a in the associated tables on outcomes of completed initial assessments of claims assessed in the period from October 2015 to December 2015 shows:

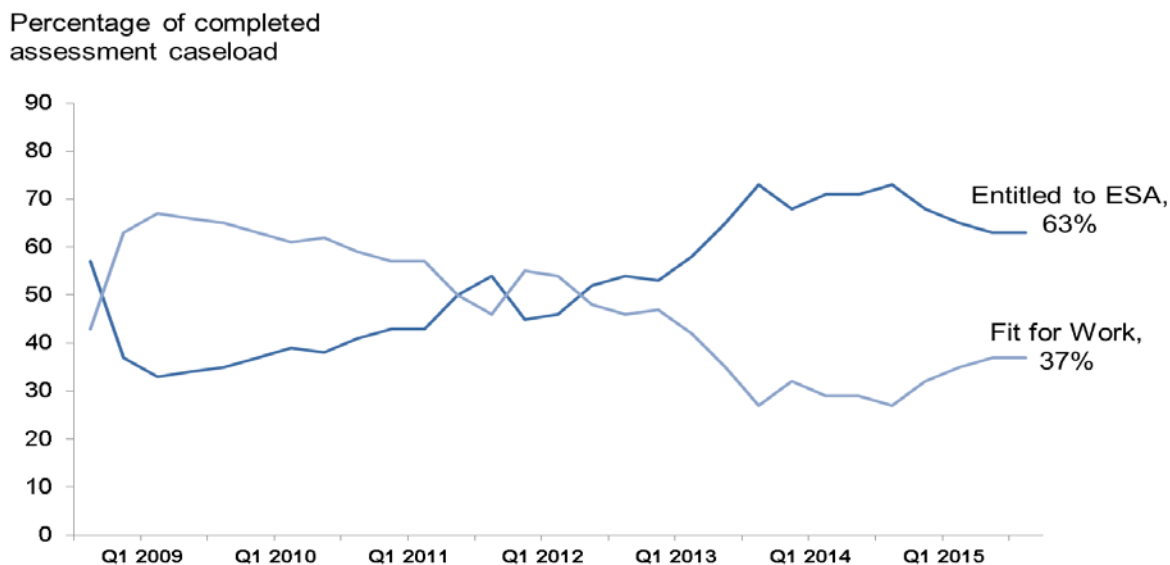
- 63 per cent of claimants were entitled to Employment and Support Allowance. Within this –
 - 8 per cent of claimants were placed in the Work Related Activity Group, and
 - 55 per cent of claimants were placed in the Support Group; and
- 37 per cent of claimants were assessed as Fit for Work.

This represents no change to the proportion entitled to Employment and Support Allowance compared with the previous quarter; the proportion assigned to the Work Related Activity Group has decreased by 2 percentage point from 10 to 8 whilst the proportion assigned to the Support Group has increased by 2 percentage points from 53 to 55. The proportion of cases found Fit for Work remains the same as the last quarter at 37 per cent. Please see note at [paragraph \[1\]](#) above for explanation of potential causes for changes in the most recent periods.

Figure 2 below shows the time series of Table 2a where:

From April 2009 to October 2011 there was a downward trend in claimants assessed as Fit for Work and an upward trend in eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance. In the quarter to January 2012 to March 2012 there was an increase in claimants assessed as Fit for Work and a decrease in eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance. This was then followed by a further decline in the proportion assessed as Fit for Work and upward trend in eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance. This emerging change will continue to be monitored in subsequent quarters. However please see note at [paragraph \[1\]](#) above for explanation of potential causes for changes in recent periods.

Figure 2: Outcome of initial functional assessment by date of assessment, Great Britain



1.1.4 Initial outcomes adjusted following appeal – Tables 3 and 4

The statistics on initial outcomes can be adjusted to reflect the results of appeals. To date, 35 cent of all Fit for Work decisions have been appealed against. These results are only for cases where the assessments process has been completed, and therefore exclude all claims closed before assessment and those still in progress. The following results are for cohorts based on the date claims were started.

Table 3 in the accompanying tables on appeal rulings relating to claims starting from January 2015 to March 2015 shows:

- 46 per cent of initial Fit for Work decisions appealed against were upheld after challenge; and
- 54 per cent of initial Fit for Work decisions appealed against were overturned after challenge.

These percentages represent a decrease of 1 per cent for decisions upheld and an increase of 1 per cent for decisions overturned when compared to the previous quarter. However, this comparison should be treated with caution as, although statistical outputs are presented to March 2015, figures for more recent dates are likely to change as more appeal cases are heard by the Tribunal Service. Note that the above statistics are for 2,600 (8 per cent) Fit for Work decisions with a completed appeal in this period. This number has slightly increased in comparison to the previous release which showed 2,000 (7 per cent) Fit for Work decisions with a completed appeal between October 2014 and December 2014 (March 2016 release).

Figure 3 below shows the time series of Table 3 showing the outcome of appeals heard on Fit for Work decisions.

The chart shows a steady decline in the trend for the proportion of initial Fit for Work decisions that are reversed in each successive period by HMCTS until early 2013 when there was a significant increase. The most recent quarter (January 2015 to March 2015) shows a slight increase on the previous quarterly figure. The number of appeals has been decreasing and the percentages for the quarter January 2015 to March 2015 are for 2,600 Fit for Work decisions with a completed appeal. This compares to 3,900 fit for work decisions a year earlier in the quarter January 2014 to March 2014. In addition, the proportions for more recent months are likely to change when the outcomes of appeals still to be heard are included. Because of this and the reduced number of appeals, caution should be applied before drawing conclusions from the more recent periods.

Since October 2013, claimants who wish to dispute a decision – including a decision which is based on the outcome of a Work Capability Assessment – are required to ask DWP to reconsider and revise the decision. This is called a ‘mandatory reconsideration’. An appeal cannot be lodged with HMCTS until the mandatory reconsideration process has been undertaken and completed. Statistics on mandatory reconsiderations can be viewed [here](#):

Figure 3: Outcome of appeals heard on Fit for Work decisions in initial functional assessment by date of claim start, Great Britain

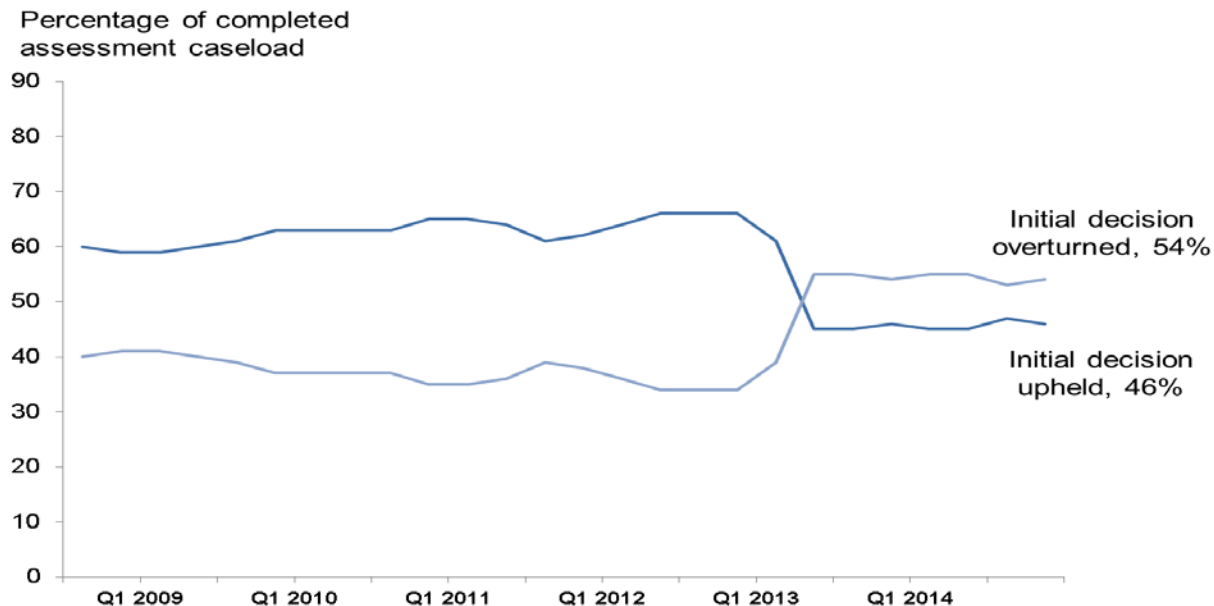


Table 4 on outcomes of completed initial assessments adjusted to account for outcomes after appeals relating to claims started in the period from July 2015 to September 2015 shows:

- 66 per cent of claimants were entitled to Employment and Support Allowance. Within this –
 - 12 per cent of claimants were placed in the Work Related Activity Group, and
 - 54 per cent of claimants were placed in the Support Group; and
- 34 per cent of claimants were assessed as Fit for Work.

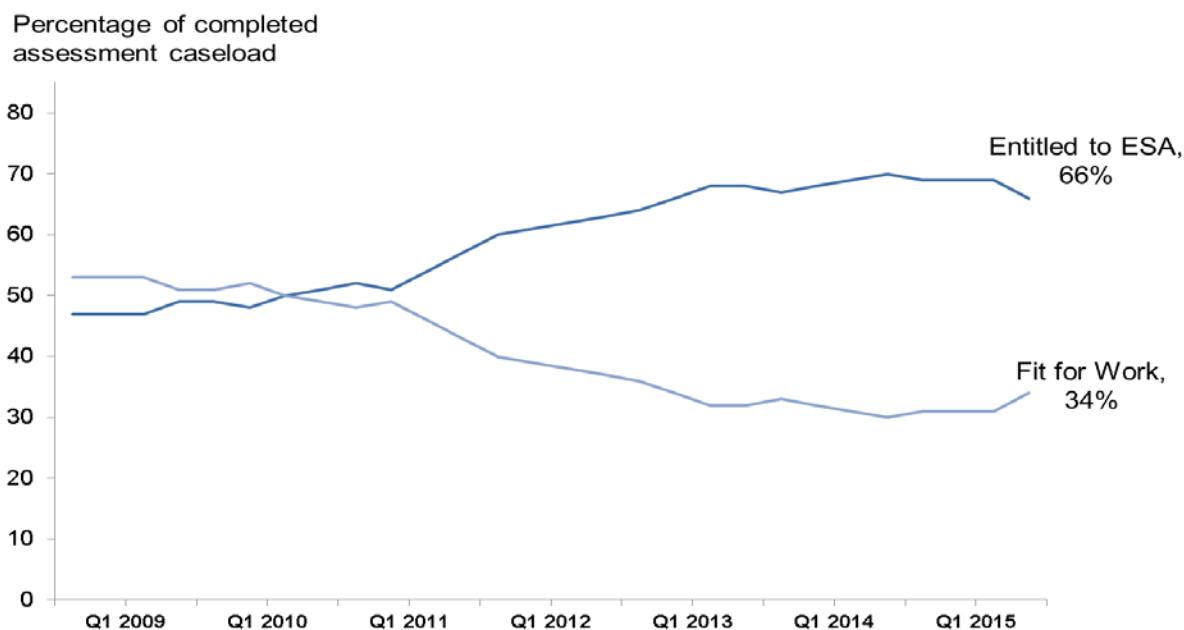
The proportion entitled to Employment and Support Allowance has decreased by 3 percentage points from 69 to 66 compared with the previous quarter; the percentage assigned to the Work Related Activity Group remained constant at 12 per cent and the proportion assigned to the Support Group fell by 3 percentage points from 57 to 54. The proportion of cases found fit for work compared with the last quarter has risen by 3 percentage point from 31 to 34. However, this comparison should be treated with caution as the effect of claims closed before a decision was reached or in progress and the effect of appeals not yet heard would be expected to have more impact on recent months.

Figure 4 shows the time series of Table 4 where:

From October 2008 until March 2011 there is a broadly flat trend in Fit for Work and eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance. From April 2011 up to the previous quarter (April – June 23015) there has been a downward trend in Fit for Work and an upward trend in eligibility for Employment

and Support Allowance. Recent quarters have seen slight deviances from this trend with ESA entitlement falling and Fit for Work rising in the latest quarter. See note at [paragraph \[1\]](#) above for explanation of potential causes for changes in recent periods.

Figure 4: Outcome of initial functional assessment adjusted to account for the outcome of appeal by date of claim start, Great Britain



1.1.5 Repeat outcomes by assessment date – Table 2b

Repeat outcomes are those for the claimant's subsequent assessments after a re-referral period. By definition, these results can only be for cases where the first and/or subsequent functional assessments have been completed, and therefore exclude all claims closed before assessments and those still in progress. Around 40 per cent of repeat assessments originally migrated from incapacity benefits. The following results are for cohorts based on the date assessments were completed, and show outcomes before appeals.

Table 2b in the accompanying tables on outcomes of completed initial assessments of claims assessed in the period from October 2015 to December 2015 shows:

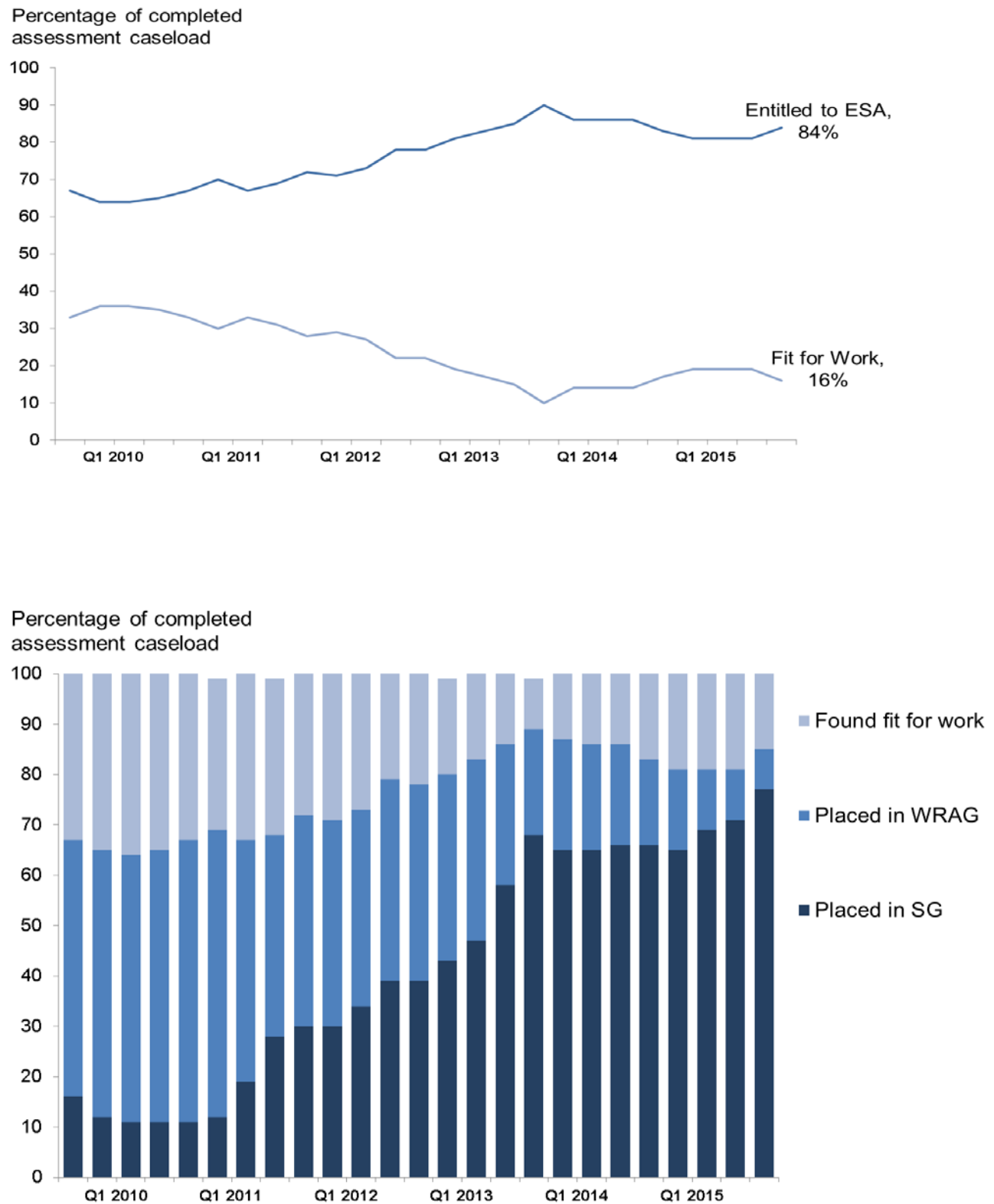
- 84 per cent of claimants were entitled to Employment and Support Allowance. Within this –
 - 8 per cent of claimants were placed in the Work Related Activity Group, and
 - 77 per cent of claimants were placed in the Support Group; and
- 16 per cent of claimants were assessed as Fit for Work.

Figure 5 below shows the time series of Table 2b where:

From the quarter October 2009 to December 2009 until the quarter July 2011 to September 2011 there is a broadly flat trend in entitlement. This is followed by an increase in entitlement until October 2013 to December 2013 quarter when it peaked at 90 percent. Since then the proportion has been gradually falling until this quarter to December 2015 where we see an increase of 3 per cent.

In addition, there is more of a pattern in placement into groups after the bedding down of the benefit, with distinct growth in the Support Group and decline in the Work Related Activity Group from April 2011. This is likely to be due to an increasing proportion of longer-term claims (e.g. claimed re-assessed from Incapacity Benefit) reaching repeat assessment. See note at [paragraph \[1\]](#) above for explanation of potential causes for changes in recent periods.

Figure 5: Outcome of repeat functional assessment by date of assessment, Great Britain



1.1.6 Repeat outcomes by claim start date – Table 1b

Repeat outcomes are as above, but the following results are for cohorts based on when the Employment and Support Allowance claim was originally started, rather than the date assessments were completed. Around 33 per cent of repeat assessments cases originally migrated from incapacity benefits.

Table 1b on outcomes of completed repeat assessments of claims started in the period from July 2015 to September 2015 shows:

- 70 per cent of claimants were entitled to Employment and Support Allowance. Within this –
 - 18 per cent of claimants were placed in the Work Related Activity Group, and
 - 52 per cent of claimants were placed in the Support Group; and
- 30 per cent of claimants were assessed Fit for Work.

The 70 per cent of claims entitled to Employment and Support Allowance represents 1000 claims. This compares with 600 claims entitled to Employment and Support Allowance seen in the previous quarter, between April 2015 and June 2015 (March 2016 release). This figure of 600 has now increased to 1,700 for the previous quarter due to an influx of repeat claims. In December 2015 repeat assessments were restarted following a period of remission. This is reflected in the statistics this quarter for table 1b where increases can be seen in the number of repeat assessments for claims which started in historic years.

The overall proportion entitled to the ESA benefit peaked in June 13 at 86 percentage points and has fallen gradually to 70 percentage points in September 2015.

Note that:

Outcome of repeat assessments are more often entitled to Employment and Support Allowance, both in terms of the Work Related Activity Group and Support Group, than in the initial assessments. This is because existing claimants frequently have a longer-term health condition.

1.2 New claims context statistics

The narrative here looks at the supplementary tables for:

- reason for placement into the Support Group and Work Related Activity Group after initial assessments adjusted by appeals; and
- ICD10 code groups and/or functional impairments for Support Group and Work Related Activity Group after initial assessment.

To note, the figures in the following tables will not sum to 100 per cent horizontally because claimants can have more than one impairment.

1.2.1 Reasons for being in the Support Group – Table 5

The statistics in table 5 look at the possible reasons for the claimants' placement into the Support Group. These results are only for cases where the assessment process has been completed, and therefore exclude all claims closed before assessment and those still in progress at some point in the assessment process.

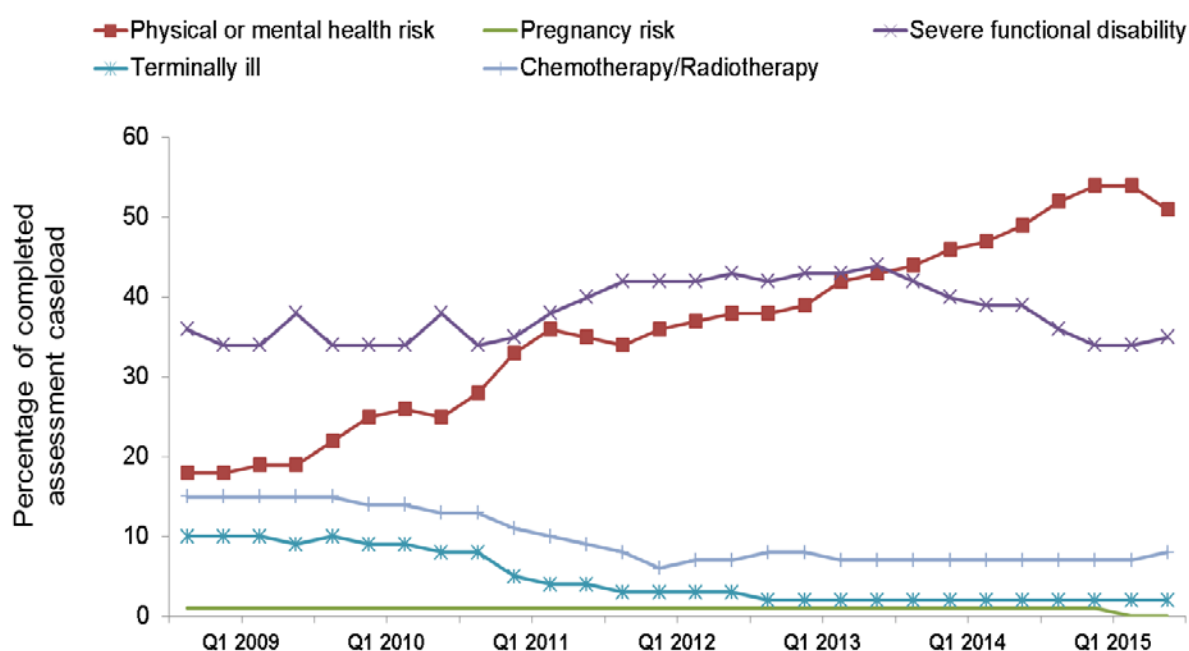
Figure 6 below shows the breakdown of Table 5 where:

For cases started between July 2015 and September 2015 the proportion being assigned to the Support Group due to a physical or mental health risk has dropped from 54 to 51 percentage points.

This is the first time we have seen a decrease since 2009. This can be attributed to procedures introduced in December 2015 where claimants with a physical or mental health risk can be assigned to the Work Related Activity Group when previously they were all assigned to the Support Group.

The proportion assigned to the severe functional disability group has been decreasing since September 2013 and this quarter remains the same as the previous quarter at 34 per cent. Chemotherapy/Radiotherapy proportions have remained fairly stable since September 2012, with increases or decreases of up to 2 percentage points and the percentage has remained at 7 per cent for the last two years. Pregnancy risk has remained as a broadly flat trend and terminally ill, after falling steadily to December 12, has remained a broadly flat trend to September 2015.

Figure 6: Support Group at functional assessment initially or after appeal split into reasons for assignment, Great Britain



1.2.2 Work Related Activity Group at functional assessment initially or after appeal – Table 6

The statistics in Table 6 look at the possible reason for claimants' placement in the Work Related Activity Group. These results are only for cases where the assessment process has been completed, and therefore exclude all claims closed before assessment and those still in progress at some point in the assessment process.

Table 6 shows that in the period from July 2015 to September 2015:

- 52 per cent of claimants were assigned to the Work Related Activity Group as a result of initial assessment. Within this –
 - 34 per cent of claimants had 15 or more points at assessment,
 - 17 per cent of claimants were assigned due to medical reasons
- 49 per cent of claimants were assigned to the Work Related Activity Group related to recourse. Within this –
 - 4 percentage of claimants were assigned after appeal;

- 45 per cent of claimants were revised following reconsideration⁴ where the DWP decision differs from the Maximus recommendation; and
- The comparison for the latest quarter should be treated with caution as the effect of appeals not yet heard would be expected to have more impact on recent months.

In comparison, Table 6 shows that **to date**:

- 60 per cent of claimants were assigned to the Work Related Activity Group as a result of initial assessment. Within this –
 - 48 per cent of claimants had 15 or more points at assessment;
 - 10 per cent of claimants were assigned due to medical reasons; and
 - 2 per cent as a result of clerical assessment.
- 41 per cent of claimants were assigned to the Work Related Activity Group related to recourse. Within this –
 - 21 per cent of claimants were assigned after appeal; and
 - 20 per cent of claimants were revised following reconsideration and where the DWP decision differs from the Assessment Provider recommendation.

1.2.3 Employment and Support Allowance allocation by ICD10 – Table 7

Table 7 in the associated tables breaks down all Employment and Support Allowance initial assessments outcomes and statuses (before appeal) by the internationally recognised ICD10 health condition groups. These results are only for cases where the assessment process has been completed, and therefore exclude all claims closed before assessment and those still in progress.

1.2.4 Work Related Activity Group – 15 points or more by functional impairment – Table 8

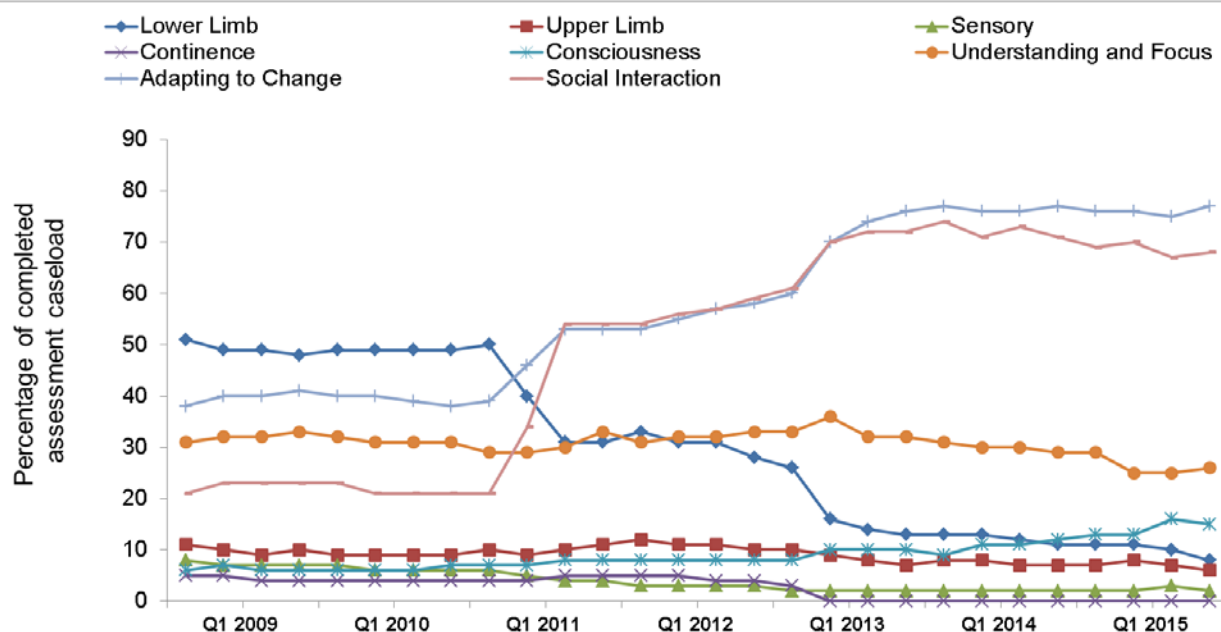
Table 8 in the supplementary tables is for claimants placed into the Work Related Activity Group after the initial assessment. It divides all Work Related Activity Group assessments between October 2008 and June 2015 for claimants scoring 15 points or more by functional impairments. These results are only for cases where the assessment process has been completed, and therefore exclude all claims closed before assessment and those still in progress.

Figure 7 below shows the breakdown of Table 8 (note, these figures will not sum to 100 per cent because some claimants will have multiple impairments):

The proportion of cases assigned to the Work Related Activity Group due to Understanding and Focus has increased slightly this quarter compared to last quarter from 25 to 26 per cent. Following a steady rise in the proportion of cases assigned due to Social Interaction up to December 2013, it has since fluctuated very slightly from quarter to quarter; this quarter has seen a rise of 1 per cent. The proportion assigned for lower limb reasons has been decreasing since the quarter January to March 2011 and the trend continues this quarter at 8 per cent; a decrease of 2 percentage points compared to last quarter. The remaining conditions remain very stable this quarter and have shown little fluctuation over the last year.

⁴ 'At reconsideration' includes cases that will have been revised following reconsideration or mandatory reconsideration and where the DWP decision differs from the Assessment Provider recommendation i.e. those placed in the Work Related Activity Group following a Fit for Work or Support Group Assessment Provider recommendation. *MR statistics will be included in this publication from September but can currently be viewed here.* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-work-capability-assessment-mandatory-reconsiderations-data-to-april-2016>

Figure 7: Work Related Activity Group (15 points or more) at initial functional assessment split into functional impairments by date of claim start, Great Britain



1.2.5 Work Related Activity Group – 15 points or more by functional impairment and ICD10 – Table 9

Table 9 in the accompanying tables breaks down claimants placed into the Work Related Activity Group after the initial assessment. It divides by claimants' functional impairment descriptors for scoring 15 points or more and by their ICD10 condition. It counts people with multiple impairments more than once. These results are only for cases where the assessment process has been completed, and therefore exclude all claims closed before assessment and those still in progress.

2.1 Reassessment of incapacity benefit

9,900 incapacity benefits claimants have been referred for reassessment in the period from July 2015 to September 2015. Since the start of the reassessment process up to September 2015 a total of 1,482,000 Incapacity Benefits claimants had been referred for reassessment.

2.1.1 Status of claims closed before assessment and those still in progress – Table 10

In the period from July 2015 to September 2015, 16 per cent of incapacity benefits claims that were referred for reassessment had not completed the WCA process by March 2016; of these 2 per cent were closed before a decision was made and 14 per cent were still in progress.

2.1.2 Comparison with claims closed before assessment and those still in progress of new ESA claims

Comparing uncompleted assessment processes for reassessment referrals and new claims shows that:

- a small proportion of reassessed claims were still in progress at the time the data were extracted, which is lower than for new ESA claims; and

- a much lower proportion of reassessed claims were closed before the process was complete than for new ESA claims.

The lower proportion of work in progress for reassessed claims in comparison to new Employment and Support Allowance claims can be explained by different claimant journeys. For reassessed claims the total process is shorter, as the statistics only show reassessed claims once they have been referred to the Centre for Health and Disability Assessments. For new Employment and Support Allowance claims the statistics also include the period covering the initial contact of a claimant to set up an Employment and Support Allowance claim. For reassessed claimants this part of the claimant journey does not apply as they already have established benefit claims for Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or Income Support. Due to this shorter claimant journey one would expect fewer claims still in progress at the time the data was extracted.

Current data does not allow anything conclusive to be said about the destinations of closed and in progress cases, nor to infer what would have been or will be the outcome of assessment.

2.1.3 Outcomes of reassessments – Table 10

These results exclude claims closed before assessment or those still in progress. They are adjusted to account for outcomes after appeals where an appeal has been heard.

Table 10 on outcomes of completed reassessments which were referred in the period from July 2015 to September 2015 shows:

- 94 per cent of claimants were entitled to Employment and Support Allowance. Within this –
 - 6 per cent of claimants were placed in the Work Related Activity Group, and
 - 88 per cent of claimants were placed in the Support Group; and
- 6 per cent of claimants were assessed as Fit for Work.

See note at [paragraph \[1\]](#) above for explanation of potential causes for changes in recent periods.

2.1.4 Comparison with the initial outcomes of new Employment and Support Allowance claims

These figures show a higher proportion of claims entitled to Employment and Support Allowance than for new Employment and Support Allowance claims.

It is *likely* that Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support claimants being reassessed for Employment and Support Allowance differ from new Employment and Support Allowance claims, with a greater proportion having long standing and multiple health conditions resulting in a limited capability for work decision at the time the reassessment is completed.

2.1.5 Comparison with previous figures

The figures in Table 10 show the proportion entitled to Employment and Support Allowance has dropped 2 percentage points since the previous quarterly level of 96 per cent. The proportion of those assigned to the Work Related Activity Group increased by 1 percentage point, whereas the proportion assigned to the Support Group fell by 3 percentage points.

However, this comparison should be treated with caution, both because the exclusion of in progress cases would be expected to have more impact on recent months and because the characteristics of those reassessed at the beginning of the process may be different from those reassessed later on. Further the period cohorts for the latest months worth of data adjust the least for the situation after appeal, as many appeal processes are still ongoing. Therefore these statistics are likely to alter in successive statistical reports.

Table 11 shows a breakdown by region and local authority for all incapacity benefits claimants that

were referred for reassessment before the end of September 2015. Decisions made on these claims up until March 2016 are included in these statistics.

Notes

1. The Quarterly Official Statistical Bulletin

This bulletin and supporting tables present information on claims started between July and September 2015 and appeals outcomes to March 2016 for Employment and Support Allowance in Great Britain via statistics on:

- volumes for outcomes of completed assessments and for status of claims still in progress and claims closed before the assessment process is complete; and
- percentages for outcomes of the completed assessments.

To view the tables and background information associated with this bulletin please use the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employment-and-support-allowance-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessment>

This publication also updates figures provided in previous releases.

These updates reflect additions to and revisions of the source data. The publication uses the final DWP Decision Maker's decision, or the recommendation made by the Assessment Provider from the Centre for Health and Disability Assessment, when the Decision Maker's decision is not yet available providing a more complete analysis.

Note that robust data is only available for claims that began at least 9 months ago due to the time required to arrange and complete assessments and record and process data.

2. National Statistics Code of Practice

DWP complies with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and supporting Principles. Detailed policy statements and statement of compliance with the pre-release access to official statistics order 2008 are available at: [DWP policy statements](#)

Detailed policy and methodology relating to this Bulletin are available via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessment-policies-and-statements>

- Quality
- Methodology
- Uses and Users

The UK Statistics Authority report on the compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics for the Statistical Summary is report number 242 at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

DWP would like to hear your views on our statistical publications. If you use any of our statistics publications, we would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Please email DWP at stats-consultation@dwpgsi.gov.uk.

An ongoing questionnaire, enabling DWP to target future consultations at interested users; shaping the future direction of statistics development to address user needs; and helping ensure value for money, whilst giving users a structured way of expressing their views is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/questionnaire-on-esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-statistics>

Completed questionnaires can be returned by e-mail to stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or by post to the following address:

The Development Team
Data and Analytics
Department for Work and Pensions
Room BP5201
Benton Park Road
Longbenton
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
NE98 1YX

Users are also invited to join the “Welfare and Benefit Statistics” community at:
<http://www.statsusernet.org.uk>.

3. Work Capability Assessment development / reviews

The Work Capability Assessment was developed by medical and technical experts alongside disability organisations. It is subject to continuous review.

Independent Review

In February 2013 the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions appointed Dr Paul Litchfield to undertake the fourth independent review of the Work Capability Assessment. In March 2014 the Government published a response to Dr Litchfield’s recommendations:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-work-capability-assessment-independent-review-year-4>

In March 2014 Dr Paul Litchfield was re-appointed to carry out the fifth and final independent review of the Work Capability Assessment. The review was published in November 2014:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-capability-assessment-independent-review-year-5>

In February 2015 the Government’s response to Dr Litchfield’s review was published:

Background and full text of reports are on Gov.uk at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/simplifying-the-welfare-system-and-making-sure-work-pays/supporting-pages/improving-the-work-capability-assessment>

Work and Pensions Select Committee (WPSC) report on Employment and Support Allowance and Work Capability Assessment

The WPSC presented a report on ESA and Work Capability Assessment in July 2014.

The Government’s response to the WPSC report was also published on 27 November 2014. The response covers each of the recommendations in the WPSC report and announces a package of measures to increase health and employment support for ESA claimants. The response is published on GOV.UK.at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-and-support-allowance-and-work-capability-assessments-response-to-the-work-and-pensions-committee>

4. Benefit Eligibility

After the assessment, support is offered to help individuals back into work, irrespective of whether the claimants were placed in the Work Related Activity Group, moved to Jobseekers Allowance, or placed in the Support Group.

Employment and Support Allowance provides financial help to people of working age who are unable to work because of illness or disability. Eligibility to the assessment phase of the benefit is dependent on personal circumstances. The most current information on eligibility is available on the GOV.UK website.

The GOV.UK website provides a complete explanation of eligibility at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance#overview>

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/eligibility>

In recognition of the additional support needed, those whose fitness for work is established at the face to face assessment and go on to claim Jobseeker's Allowance facing substantive disadvantage may be referred to the provision 3 months into their new claim.

The departmental website provides more explanation about the Work Programme at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/helping-people-to-find-and-stay-in-work/supporting-pages/managing-the-work-programme>

For statistics relating to these new programmes see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-work-programme-support> and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/work-programme-statistics--2>

Publications contain information on the take-up of the main income-related benefits in Great Britain: including Employment and Support Allowance (income related) are published via:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up--2>

5. Benefit Rates

The GOV.UK website provides the latest information on Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support benefit rates at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/what-youll-get>

<https://www.gov.uk/severe-disablement-allowance>

<https://www.gov.uk/income-support/what-youll-get>

<https://www.gov.uk/incapacity-benefit>

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/further-information>

Often the basic and component rates are just a part of the total package of support received by the claimant. Additional support may be available through Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments.

The GOV.UK website provides information on wider financial support at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

6. Statutory instruments

Principles on amounts payable and rules for calculation of this benefit, and current rates are outlined in legislation:

The Welfare Reform Act 2007, Sections 2 and 4

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/5/pdfs/ukpga_20070005_en.pdf

The Employment and Support Allowance Regulations 2008

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2008/794/contents/made>

The Employment and Support Allowance Regulations 2013 (Part 9)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/379/contents/made>

The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 2014

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2014/9780111108789/contents>

7. Reasons for assignment to the Work Related Activity Group

The GOV.UK website provides a broad explanation for potential reasons for placement in the Work Related Activity Group:

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/overview>

Note that the department does not always capture the reason for placement in the Support Group (as with the Work Related Activity Group). This is often due to assessments recorded clerically where the reason is not stated, such as where assignment follows an appeal or reconsideration.

The legislation, specifically Part 6, gives more detail on allocation at the following link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2008/794/contents/made?view=plain>

Information about the health conditions of Employment and Support Allowance claimants is recorded at the start of the claim, and is based on the primary condition as listed on General Practitioner's evidence.

In 2010, information was transferred into central databases for all claims still live in November 2009 and new claims thereafter. This was supplemented by that recorded at the face to face assessment or recorded by DWP's frontline at first contact for some claims that closed before November 2009. However, there is still some incomplete data, particularly before the stated cut-off date.

For further background information regarding Employment and Support Allowance – Work Capability Assessments see the Background Information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employment-and-support-allowance-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessment>

8. International comparisons

The World Health Organisation (WHO) produces the International Classification of Diseases, 2010 (ICD10). The ICD code was endorsed by the 43rd World Health Assembly in May 1990, and came into use in all member states from 1994.

The WHO website provides more detail on this code applied to Employment and Support Allowance cases in this statistical series at the following link:

<http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/>

9. Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service was created on 1 April 2011. It brings together Her Majesty's Courts Service and the Tribunals Service into one integrated agency providing support for the administration of justice in courts and tribunals.

Responsibility for publishing Tribunal statistics resides with Ministry of Justice and they publish statistical information via their website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/about/statistics>

From January 2014, this release has been aligned with the Quarterly Tribunals statistics release. As a result the latest data from the Centre for Health and Disability Assessments and tribunals is currently 3 months lagged at publication date.

10. Freedom of Information

Users can find additional statistical analyses that have not been included in our standard publications at:

Statistical Freedom of Information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-statistical-foi-releases>

Ad Hoc Statistical publications

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ad-hoc-statistical-publications-list>

For example, anyone claiming Employment and Support Allowance will undergo the Work Capability Assessment. The Work Capability Assessment is based on the premise that eligibility should not be based on a person's condition, but rather on the way that condition limits their functional capability. Following the Work Capability Assessment, the Assessment Provider provides a recommendation of the claimant's eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance. The final decision on benefit entitlement is made by a DWP Decision Maker informed by advice from the Assessment Provider and other available evidence. Statistics are available for this information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esa-work-capability-assessment-decisions-in-great-britain-june-2012-to-may-2013>

11. Known Issues, Changes and Revisions to the Statistical Bulletin

- The June 2016 release of these statistics has been delayed due to a discrepancy with the source data. Investigations and actions have been completed to resolve these issues.
- Application of a revision policy entails updating historic numbers with each issue of the publication to reflect change based on two factors in particular – appeals on initial decisions which can take time to come through, and decisions which are not recorded until after the 13 week assessment phase. It is therefore likely that the statistics underestimate the proportion of claimants who will ultimately be awarded the benefit, by greater amounts for more recent periods. Early analysis shows that final position is not reached at 2 years.
- This product has been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority for National Statistics status. The report has been published at:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-242---statistics-on-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments.pdf>.
Hence, amendments have been made to the notes and commentary to address the requirements outlined in the UK Statistics Authority assessment report:
 - Published a series of documents to help users understand the methodology; Quality; valid uses and users of the series.
 - Improvements to some of the notes and background in the publication.
 - Improvements to the commentary in the publication.

12. Notification of future changes to the Summary

- DWP statisticians are working to complete a full and detailed check of the whole production process of this series and produce statistics for the entire Employment and Support Allowance process, including Mandatory Reconsiderations. Official Statistics on Mandatory Reconsiderations was published on 9th June at : <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-work-capability-assessment-mandatory-reconsiderations-data-to-april-2016>
These statistics will be included in the routine quarterly ESA WCA statistics from September 2016. Additional Statistics on ESA-WCA Mandatory Reconsideration clearance times and more detailed cohort information will also be included for the first time.
- An ad-hoc publication on Mandatory Reconsiderations was released on 17th December 2014.

The ad-hoc release focussed on ESA Mandatory Reconsiderations. The report has been published at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387871/MR_ad_hoc_final.pdf

Also as part of these checks, methodology will be reviewed for classifying and defining Maximus referrals as being 'still in progress'.

13. Other National and Official Statistics issued by the Department for Work and Pensions

Details of other National and Official Statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions can be found on the GOV.UK website at the following links:

- DWP statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>, for example Employment and Support Allowance caseload statistics are available via the Department's Tabulation Tool http://tabulation-tool.dwp.gov.uk/100pc/esa/tabtool_esa.html
- Benefit expenditure and caseload tables (including Employment and Support Allowance) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-expenditure-tables>
- In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, all DWP National Statistics are also announced via the UK Statistics Authority publication hub at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/release-calendar/index.html>
- In addition, users can find links to additional statistical analyses that have not been included in our standard publications at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ad-hoc-statistical-publications-list>