

Our Refs: 2014-3979
2014-4525
2014-4527
2014-4713
2014-4718

7 November 2014

Dear Trudy Baddams,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information requests received on 12 September 2014, 9 October 2014 and 25 October 2014.

You asked:

FOI 2014-3979

- “1. What is the average waiting for first payment of ESA?**
- 2. What is the average wait for face to face assessment for new ESA claimants?**
- 3. In the last year What percentage of ESA claimants were put in the WRAG Groups?**
- 4. What percentage of ESA claimants were put in the Support Group?**
- 5. What percentage of ESA claimants were found fit for work?”**

FOI 2014-4525

- “6. How many ESA / JSA claims have ended with the reason being death 2013**
- 7. How long is the average waiting time to receive first payment of ESA**
- 8. How many ESA sanctions were passed to claimants on ESA in April 2014**
- 9. How many ESA sanctions of less than 1 month were passed on ESA claimants in April 2014**
- 10. How many claimants in WRAG actually held a sick / fit note from their own doctor / specialist / surgeon**
- 11. How many claimants on JSA actually held a sick / fit note from their own doctor / specialist / surgeon”**

FOI 2014-4527

- “12. How many ESA claimants in WRAG are on Workfare, work programmes, voluntary work**
- 13. How many ESA claimants have been wrongly placed in WRAG**
- 14. How many ESA claimants have been wrongly placed on JSA**
- 15. How many MR's have over-turned decisions from WCA's”**

FOI 2014-4713

“Dear Department for Work and Pensions,

16. How many ESA claimants are on workfare, work programmes or volunteering?

17. How many ESA claimants with sick notes / fit notes are on workfare, work programmes or volunteering?”

FOI 2014-4718

“18. At what age do women retire in the UK?

19. How many women over the age of 60 are claiming ESA?

20. How many women over the age of 60 are claiming JSA?

21. At what age do men retire in the UK?

22. How many men over the age of 60 are claiming ESA?

23. How many men over the age of 60 are claiming JSA?”

Please note that we have added numbers to your questions for ease of response.

In response to questions 3, 4, 5, 19, 20, 22, and 23, section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act allows us to direct you to information which is already reasonably accessible to you.

With regard to questions 3-5, the Department publishes Official Statistics on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) through its website which can be found here:

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

Please note, the latest publication was released on 11 September 2014 and includes the outcomes of initial and repeat functional assessments by month of claim start, up to December 2013 and can be found in Tables 1a and 1b. Also the outcomes of Incapacity Benefits Reassessments (IBR), adjusted to account for the outcome of appeal, by month of referral up to December 2013 can be found in Table 10.

Further information on how much and at which point you can be paid ESA can be found here:

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

With regard to questions 19, 20, 22, and 23, the Department publishes statistics on all the benefits you require through its Tabulation Tool, which allows you to design your own tables.

For example, to produce statistics on the number of ESA claimants by age and gender, visit the Tabulation Tool via the link below and follow the instructions provided:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-statistics-tabulation-tool>

1. Under 'Caseload statistics' select **Benefit caseload national statistics (WPLS data) (includes ESA)**.
2. Under Benefit/Scheme select **Employment and Support Allowance**.
3. Under Analysis select **Caseload (Thousands)**.

4. Under Row select **Age of claimant**.
5. Under Column select a breakdown of your choice, for example, **Gender of claimant**.
6. There are a range of variables to create a subset of your data, however if no subset is required select **NONE**.
7. Under Date, select **the quarter required**. The latest data available for analysis is **February 2014**.
8. Once you are satisfied, select **Get Table** to retrieve your cross-tabulation.

Repeat the steps above, choosing **Jobseeker's Allowance** at step 2, in order to retrieve the rest of the information you require.

With regard to question 13, all decisions made by the Department are based on the information and evidence available at the time of decision therefore the decision to place a claimant into the WRAG is not incorrect.

With regard to question 14, ESA claimants are not placed on JSA. If an ESA claimant is assessed as Fit for Work then they are no longer eligible for ESA and may make a claim for JSA if they wish to do so.

With regard to questions 18 and 21 on the retirement age of men and women, we can confirm that the Department does hold some information on the number and age of those receiving State Pension but does not hold information on whether these people have retired from the labour market and at what ages.

Information on the legislated increases in State Pension age can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-pension-age-timetable>

You may also find it useful to know that the ONS have produced a set of National Statistics on Pension Trends and in particular chapter 4 is about the Labour Market and Retirement. This publication can be found here:
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pensions/pension-trends/index.html>

Contact details for ONS can be found here:
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/site-information/information/contact-us/index.html>

With regard to questions 6, 8, 9 and 15, as these statistics are intended for future publication this information is exempt from disclosure under the terms of Section 22 (Information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). This exemption is qualified, and is therefore subject to a public interest test. The public interest test is where the Department considers whether the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding or disclosing the information requested.

Arguments in favour of disclosure: There are public interest arguments in favour of disclosure of this information at the present time. Disclosure would for example improve transparency in the operations of the Department.

Arguments against disclosure: There are public interest arguments against disclosure of this information at the present time. These arguments include that it is in the public interest to adhere to the existing publication process for official statistics, which includes time for the data to be collated and properly verified.

It is also in the public interest to ensure that the publication of official information is a properly planned and managed process, to ensure that the data are accurate once placed into the public domain. It is also in the public interest to ensure that the information is available to all members of the public at the same time, and premature publication could undermine the principle of making the information available to all at the same time through the official publication process.

On this occasion, the balance of the public interest test falls in favour of withholding this information. As explained above, statistics on this issue will be published in due course.

You may find it useful to know that the Department has published statistics on sanctions decisions made up to March 2014 and further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/jobseekers-allowance-sanctions>

In response to your remaining questions 1, 2, 7, 10, 11, 12, 16 and 17, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) provides that requests can be aggregated for the purpose of estimating whether the cost limits apply. This is where more than one request has been made within 60 consecutive working days relating to similar information and the requests have been made by the same person. In this instance, for cost purposes the Department has decided to aggregate these 4 requests that you raised in the past 60 consecutive working days.

Therefore we can confirm that Department for Work and Pensions holds information falling within the description specified in your requests. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with your requests 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 FOIA the Department is not obliged to comply with your requests and we will not be processing your requests further.

Under section 16 of the FOIA we are obliged to assist you in providing options to narrow your requests, by reforming or refocusing them, so that they fall beneath the cost limit. In this case our advice would be to narrow your remaining questions so that you only ask for the following information and specify the required time period for:

- The number of Employment and Support Allowance claimants in the Work Related Activity Group who have been referred to the Work Programme.
- The Actual Average Clearance Time (AACT) for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

- The average length of time between making a new claim to ESA and the assessment date by month of claim start.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact us 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@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central Fol Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, SW1H 9NA. 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