

Research report

Employment and Support Allowance: Findings from a follow-up survey with customers

by Helen Barnes, Paul Sissons and Helen Stevens

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 745

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ix
The Authors.....	x
Abbreviations.....	xi
Glossary of terms.....	xii
Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	5
1.1 About this report.....	5
1.2 The aims of this research.....	5
1.3 Methodology.....	5
1.4 Policy context.....	6
1.4.1 <i>The introduction of ESA</i>	6
1.4.2 <i>The Work Programme</i>	7
1.4.3 <i>The evaluation of ESA</i>	7
1.5 Reporting by claim group.....	7
2 Changes in circumstances since the baseline survey.....	10
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 Changes in household and personal circumstances.....	10
2.3 Changes in health status since the baseline survey.....	12
2.4 Changes in Employment and Support Allowance claim status.....	14
2.5 Changes in other benefits and tax credits received.....	16
2.6 Conclusions.....	17
3 The Employment and Support Allowance claim process.....	18
3.1 Introduction.....	18
3.2 Claims which were in progress at the baseline survey.....	18
3.2.1 <i>The face-to-face Work Capability Assessment</i>	18
3.3 Changes since baseline survey.....	19
3.3.1 <i>Experiences of the Work Capability Assessment</i>	20

3.4	Experiences of Work-Focused Interviews	21
3.4.1	<i>Views and experiences of sanctions</i>	24
3.4.2	<i>Appeals</i>	27
3.5	Conclusions	29
4	Destinations of those leaving Employment and Support Allowance	30
4.1	Introduction.....	30
4.2	Immediate post-claim destinations.....	30
4.3	Changes in employment status by Wave 2	31
4.4	Activities of Employment and Support Allowance leavers at the time of the follow-up survey	35
4.4.1	<i>Method</i>	35
4.4.2	<i>FFW group</i>	35
4.4.3	<i>Closed/withdrawn claims</i>	36
4.4.4	<i>Overall destinations for those not in WRAG or SG</i>	36
4.5	Movements onto Jobseeker’s Allowance	39
4.5.1	<i>Experiences of claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance</i>	40
4.6	Conclusions	44
4.6.1	<i>Immediate post-ESA claim activities</i>	44
4.6.2	<i>Activities at the time of the follow-up survey</i>	44
5	Future expectations	45
5.1	Introduction.....	45
5.2	Expectations of remaining on Employment and Support Allowance	45
5.3	Expectations of return to work	46
5.3.1	<i>Claim group and age</i>	46
5.3.2	<i>Health expectations</i>	47
5.3.3	<i>Gender and future work expectations</i>	48
5.4	Expectations of future work search	48
5.4.1	<i>Overall expectations</i>	48
5.4.2	<i>Those still receiving Employment and Support Allowance</i>	49
5.5	Future work expectations – people no longer in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance	50

5.6	Conclusions	52
5.6.1	<i>Future expectations of those still receiving Employment and Support Allowance</i>	52
5.6.2	<i>Future expectations of those no longer receiving Employment and Support Allowance</i>	52
6	Conclusions.....	53
6.1	Introduction.....	53
6.2	Changes in circumstances since the baseline survey.....	53
6.3	Employment and Support Allowance claims and appeals.....	53
6.4	The Work-Related Activity Group and Work-Focused Interviews	53
6.5	Ended Employment and Support Allowance claims and next steps	54
6.6	Employment outcomes.....	54
6.7	Views and experiences of those claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance after the end of their Employment and Support Allowance claim	55
Appendix A	Employment and Support Allowance claim process (simplified).....	56
Appendix B	Health conditions.....	58

List of tables

Table 2.1	Changes in personal and household circumstances	10
Table 2.2	Partner’s current employment status, by gender	11
Table 2.3	Limiting long-term health problems at Wave 1 and Wave 2, by age	12
Table 2.4	Whether has a health problem, disability or long-term illness which limits activities or work they are able to do	12
Table 2.5	Health status at Wave 2 compared with baseline survey, by age group	13
Table 2.6	Health status compared with baseline, by main health condition.....	13
Table 2.7	Whether this is the same ESA claim as at baseline survey, by those currently receiving ESA at Wave 2	15
Table 2.8	Whether receiving same benefits at baseline and follow-up survey	16
Table 2.9	Which benefits (other than ESA) are currently being received	16
Table 3.1	Whether had WCA, and reasons if not	19
Table 3.2	Experiences of the WCA	19
Table 3.3	Whether customers had had an additional face-to-face WCA since baseline survey.....	20
Table 3.4	Experiences of repeat face-to-face WCA	20

Table 3.5	Total numbers of WFI by Wave 2, by Wave 2 claim group.....	21
Table 3.6	How helpful did you find the adviser? Was it... ..	22
Table 3.7	What was discussed in WFIs.....	22
Table 3.8	How would you rate the meetings in terms of thinking about paid work in the future? Would you say it was/they were.....	23
Table 3.9	Work orientation by number of WFIs attended.....	25
Table 3.10	Attitudes to work, WRAG, by work status prior to ESA claim	26
Table 3.11	Whether agree that compulsory nature of WFIs makes them more likely to attend, by gender	27
Table 3.12	Why people had appealed.....	28
Table 3.13	Appeal outcomes.....	28
Table 3.14	Success with appeals by whether received help	29
Table 3.15	Who helped the customer appeal?	29
Table 4.1	What ESA leavers did immediately after their claim ended	31
Table 4.2	Changes in employment status between survey waves by Wave 2 claim group	32
Table 4.3	Employment status at follow-up survey, by baseline survey claim group	33
Table 4.4	Whether had help to return to work (%).....	34
Table 4.5	Destinations by claim group, Wave 1 and Wave 2	37
Table 4.6	Receipt of JSA, by age.....	39
Table 4.7	How people found out about JSA	41
Table 4.8	What was discussed in meetings with advisers	42
Table 4.9	Other types of support identified as helpful	43
Table 5.1	How much longer people expect to stay on ESA, by Wave 2 claim group.....	45
Table 5.2	How much longer people expect to stay on ESA, by future health expectations	46
Table 5.3	Expected work status in six months, WRAG/SG claimants at Wave 2	47
Table 5.4	Expected work status in six months, by future health expectations, WRAG/SG at Wave 2.....	47
Table 5.5	Expectations of work status in six months, by gender, WRAG and SG claimants at Wave 2	48
Table 5.6	When people expect to be in work for those who did not expect to be looking within six months, by claim group at Wave 2	49
Table 5.7	When people expect to start looking for work for those who did not expect to be looking within six months, WRAG/SG claimants at Wave 2	49

Table 5.8	When people expect to start looking for work for those who did not expect to be looking within six months, by future health expectations, WRAG/SG claimants at Wave 2.....	50
Table 5.9	Expectations of work status in six months, by gender, FFW and closed withdrawn claimants at Wave 2	51
Table 5.10	When people expect to start looking for work for those who did not expect to be looking within six months, by future health expectations, FFW and closed/withdrawn claimants at Wave 2.....	51

List of figures

Figure 1.1	Weighted sample sizes by claim group, Wave 1 and Wave 2 surveys.....	9
Figure 2.1	Partner’s current employment status, by claim group at Wave 2	11
Figure 2.2	Health status compared with baseline survey, by claim group at Wave 2	14
Figure 2.3	Changes in claim group from baseline (W1) to follow-up (W2) survey.....	15
Figure 3.1	How helpful were WFIs in thinking about paid work in the future, by claim group.....	23
Figure 4.1	Current employment status at follow-up survey, by age	33
Figure 4.2	Whether returning to their usual job, by gender	34
Figure 4.3	Destinations for ended claims, baseline (W1) and follow-up (W2).....	38
Figure 4.4	Receipt of JSA, by whether has limiting health condition and gender	39
Figure 4.5	Whether in receipt of JSA, by main health condition	40
Figure 4.6	Attending meetings with an adviser	41
Figure 4.7	How adequate was the support received to find work?.....	43

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Abbreviations

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
FFW	Fit for Work
GP	General Practitioner
HCP	Healthcare Professional – a doctor, nurse or physiotherapist who carries out the Work Capability Assessment
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IES	Institute for Employment Studies
IS	Income Support
JSA	Jobseeker’s Allowance
PCA	Personal Capability Assessment
SG	Support Group
WCA	Work Capability Assessment
WFHRA	Work-Focused Health-Related Assessment
WFI	Work-Focused Interview
WRAG	Work-Related Activity Group

Glossary of terms

Access to Work	Advice and funded assistance, equipment, adaptation or services to enable disabled people to work.
Atos Healthcare	Contractor responsible for Work Capability Assessment (WCA) and Work-Focused Health-Related Assessment.
CC	A Jobcentre Plus Contact Centre, which receives most initial claims for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), by phone.
BDC	A Jobcentre Plus Benefit Delivery Centre, where ESA claims are processed and decided on.
DNA or FTA	Did not attend or Fail to attend; people not attending a WCA or Work Focused Interview (WFI) when required to do so.
ESA50	A medical form customers have to complete as part of their ESA claim, giving details of how their condition affects their day-to-day activities.
Permitted Work	An amount of paid work which people are allowed to do while still claiming Incapacity Benefit/ESA.
Provider	Department for Work and Pensions contractor supplying employment services, such as WFIs for ESA customers.
'Special Rules'	A 'fast-track' claim process for ESA for those who are terminally ill and have a life expectancy of under six months.

Summary

About this report

This report presents the findings of a follow-up telephone survey with 1,842 people who took part in an earlier, baseline face-to-face survey of people claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)¹ who had consented to be re-contacted. It was carried out by Ipsos MORI between July and September 2010.

This follow-up survey aimed to explore the progress over time of ESA claimants since the baseline survey – in particular their ongoing experiences of claiming ESA, any changes in their personal and household circumstances, and the subsequent activities of those whose ESA claim ended.

The sample of people surveyed had made an initial claim for ESA in April–June 2009, and participated in the baseline survey between December 2009 and February 2010. This follow-up survey was conducted in July–September 2010. A full technical report on the survey will be available shortly on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website².

ESA was introduced in October 2008 to replace Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS) received on the ground of incapacity. It provides financial support and personalised help for people who are unable to work, because of a health condition. From April 2011, existing incapacity benefits claimants nationally are being reassessed for ESA.

Changes in health and personal circumstances since the baseline survey

Customers generally reported few changes in their domestic and personal circumstances between the baseline and follow-up survey – almost three-quarters (74 per cent) had no changes. The most commonly-reported changes were moving home (seven per cent), attending training (ten per cent) and people moving into or out of the household (11 per cent). Ninety per cent of those still receiving ESA at the follow-up survey were on the same claim as the baseline survey. Most customers (87 per cent) had already attended a face-to-face Work Capability Assessment (WCA) at the baseline survey, so this follow-up survey does not report detailed WCA experiences.

Half of customers reported changes in their health from the baseline survey, and health was as likely to have deteriorated (25 per cent) as improved (25 per cent). For those in older age groups, health was more likely to have deteriorated, while for younger groups it was more likely to have improved.

The Employment and Support Allowance claim process

Experiences and views of Work Focused Interviews

A substantial proportion of customers (half of those placed in the Work-Related Activity Group (WRAG) and Support Group (SG)) said they had attended at least four Work Focused Interviews (WFIs) by the follow-up survey. They were well-received by customers, with 78 per cent of those in the WRAG finding personal advisers helpful, and 80 per cent finding WFIs helpful in thinking about paid work in future. As at the baseline survey, the main issues people remembered discussing were

¹ Barnes, H., Sissons, P. and Stevens, H. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Findings from a face-to-face survey of customers*. DWP Research Report No. 707.

² <http://dwp.gov.uk/research-and-statistics/>

health and its impact on work (47 per cent of those attending WFIs reported discussing this) and the type of work wanted (44 per cent reported discussing this).

Looking at attitudes to work (as measured by agreement with by a series of statements), it is clear that some statements commanded a stronger level of agreement than others, although there was no evidence of a link between the number of WFIs attended and attitudes to work. While there were high levels of agreement with the statements ‘having a job is the best way for me to be an independent person’ (85 per cent) and ‘once you’ve got a job it’s important to hang on to it’ (77 per cent), there was less consensus about others, and fewer than half of respondents (47 per cent) agreed that ‘work is good for my health’.

Of customers who had attended WFIs since the baseline survey, there were no large differences in attitudes to work between the WRAG and customers with other claim outcomes.

Sanctions

As at the baseline survey, awareness of sanctions was widespread, but knowledge of how they applied was not always accurate; as at the baseline survey, the belief that benefit would be stopped if customers missed a WFI, rather than reduced, was widespread. Eighty per cent of respondents felt that sanctions made them more likely to attend WFIs, and only a small minority of people (eight per cent) said they had actually been sanctioned for missing a WFI.

Appeals

At the baseline survey, 20 per cent of customers found Fit for Work (FFW) reported appealing, and the majority were still waiting for the outcome of their appeal. Almost all of these appeals had been decided by the time of the follow-up survey. Of those who had received an appeal decision, 46 per cent had received a decision in their favour, and 54 per cent had been found in favour of the DWP³. The most popular reason given for appealing was simply disagreeing with the WCA decision made (56 per cent said this).

Just over half (54 per cent) of the respondents who consented to data-linking⁴ reported that they had received some form of help with their appeal. The most common form of support, accounting for 48 per cent of those who had help, was a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or other advice centre. Where respondents had received help they were more likely to have won their appeal – 71 per cent who received help won, compared to 40 per cent who did not receive help⁵.

Immediate post-claim activities of the Fit for Work and closed/withdrawn claim groups

People who reported that they had left ESA (whether because they were found FFW, or their claim was closed by Jobcentre Plus, or withdrawn before a decision on it was made) were asked what they had done immediately after their claim ended.

³ This is broadly in line with 60 per cent found in favour of DWP in the official statistics. http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/esa_wca_25012011.pdf

⁴ Survey respondents were asked for consent to link their responses to administrative data held by DWP on appeals, ESA claim details, and information on other benefit claims, for the purposes of this research only.

⁵ It should be noted however that this figure is likely to be affected by the missing data from those who had appealed but did not report this in the survey and whose data are therefore absent from routed questions. See Chapter 3 for more details.

Overall, 80 per cent of this group had either claimed another income replacement benefit⁶ (43 per cent) or returned to work (37 per cent); the remaining 20 per cent gave a different response. These ‘other’ responses were fragmented and included retirement, being sick or unemployed without receiving benefit, and relying on savings or a partner’s income, or moving into education; many said simply that they did not know. In many cases it was unclear what the claimant’s income source was.

Activities of the FFW and claim closed/withdrawn groups at the time of the follow-up survey

The follow-up survey asked those found FFW, or whose claim was closed by Jobcentre Plus, or withdrawn before a decision on it was made, what they were doing at the time of the survey.

At the baseline survey, around a quarter (26 per cent) of this group were in work, a quarter (25 per cent) was claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA); six per cent were claiming other income replacement benefits; and 42 per cent were neither in work nor claiming an income replacement benefit.

By the follow-up survey the proportion in work had increased to more than one-third (35 per cent), the number claiming JSA had fallen slightly (to 21 per cent); and 37 per cent were neither in work nor claiming an income replacement benefit.

The claim closed/withdrawn group were much more likely than the FFW group to be in employment at both the baseline and follow-up surveys, while the FFW group were more likely to be neither working, nor claiming an out-of-work benefit.

Overall, ten per cent of this group viewed themselves as permanently sick and unable to work at both the baseline and follow-up survey. An additional ten per cent of this group reported being unemployed and looking for work at the time of the follow-up survey, but were not claiming an out-of-work benefit.

Movements onto JSA

The youngest respondents (aged 16-24) who were found FFW, or had a closed or withdrawn claim, were least likely to be in paid work – and most likely to be unemployed and claiming JSA – at the time of the follow-up survey. Around one-third of those in this group and a quarter of those aged 25–34 were unemployed, which corresponds with high national rates of youth unemployment⁷. Those aged under 25 may, therefore, be a priority for early receipt of services via the Work Programme.

Most (over 80 per cent) of those claiming JSA had been asked to attend meetings with an adviser⁸ and most of these (over 80 per cent) had attended two or more such meetings. The main issues discussed were how to look for work (82 per cent), and improving skills relating to job-seeking (16 per cent). Specific advice about health issues was mentioned only by a very small minority.

Around two-thirds of those reporting a health problem who claimed JSA and met with an adviser reported that the help that they received was adequate (54 per cent said this was ‘about right’ and ten per cent reported that it was more than enough to meet their needs). However, there was clearly an appetite for more advice related to managing health and work; over 40 per cent of those with a health problem who were seeing an adviser expressed a wish for more support in this area – either on the types of work that would suit their health, or advice on health adaptations employers could make.

⁶ Income replacement benefits means JSA, IS or IB.

⁷ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=12>

⁸ The definition of meetings with an adviser excluded fortnightly signing-on.

Future expectations

The vast majority of those in the WRAG or SG at the baseline survey continued to be in this group at the follow-up survey; only 15 per cent of the WRAG and ten per cent of those in the SG left ESA between the baseline and follow-up survey. Under five per cent of each group moved into work.

When asked how long they expected to stay on ESA, both groups displayed a high degree of uncertainty; 42 per cent of the SG thought they would stay on ESA indefinitely and 32 per cent did not know how long they would stay on ESA. The respective figures for the WRAG were 19 per cent and 47 per cent. Those in the WRAG were more likely to expect to stay on ESA for a year or less (23 per cent, compared to 14 per cent for the SG).

Those still receiving ESA were also asked about their expected work status in six months; 24 per cent of the WRAG thought they would be in work at this time, compared to 16 per cent of the SG. Of those who did not expect to be working in six months, a third (34 per cent) of the SG said they did not expect to work again, compared to 16 per cent of the WRAG. Almost a fifth of the WRAG (19 per cent) thought they would be looking for work, or in education or training, in six months. This suggests that a proportion envisage moving towards work, but not entering employment, in the short term.

Introduction

1.1 About this report

This report presents findings from a follow-up telephone survey of 1,842 people who made a claim for ESA between April and June 2009. They were initially surveyed face-to-face between December 2009 and February 2010, around six to ten months after they had made their initial claim for ESA⁹. Participants who agreed to be contacted again for research purposes were re-contacted and interviewed for the follow-up survey, which was conducted between July and September 2010, approximately six months after the initial ('baseline') survey.

Throughout the report, in tables, square brackets are used to indicate sample sizes less than 30. Cell percentages under one per cent are shown as [*]. Percentages are rounded up (0.5 or more) or down (0.4 or less) to the nearest whole number, so tables may not always sum to 100. Missing or refused data is excluded from calculations. All the findings discussed have been tested and are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level unless otherwise stated.

1.2 The aims of this research

The follow-up survey aimed to explore the progress over time of recent ESA claimants interviewed for the baseline survey in late 2009 and early 2010, and in particular to:

- identify any changes in health and personal circumstances between the baseline and follow-up surveys;
- explore the continuing claim experiences of those who remained in receipt of ESA, such as their experiences and views of the WCA and Work-Focused Interviews (WFIs);
- identify the immediate post-claim destinations of those no longer claiming ESA.
- explore the factors (e.g. age, health condition) associated with particular outcomes such as return to work and claiming JSA. A complementary study which looks at routes onto ESA, in terms of health and labour market history, and how these relate to whether people leave ESA, will be published shortly in the DWP research report series¹⁰.

1.3 Methodology

Both the baseline and follow-up studies were commissioned by the DWP and carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies, with fieldwork conducted by Ipsos MORI. The unadjusted response rate for the follow-up survey was 61 per cent. When account is taken of invalid telephone numbers and addresses (e.g. non-residential properties), ineligible respondents, people who had moved away and those who were too ill to be interviewed, the adjusted response rate was 70 per cent. Across both surveys the adjusted response rate is 26 per cent.

⁹ For a report of findings from this survey see Barnes, H., Sissons, P. and Stevens, H. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Findings from a face-to-face survey of customers*. DWP Research Report No. 707.

¹⁰ Barnes, H., Sissons, P. and Stevens, H. (2011, forthcoming). *Routes onto Employment and Support Allowance*. DWP Research Report.

In order to make the sample representative of the ESA population as a whole, the data were weighted. In order to avoid cluttering up the tables, it was decided to include only the weighted bases in the report.

Weighting adjustments were also made to compensate for panel non-response, and the approach adopted by Ipsos MORI was CHAID¹¹. The benefit of using CHAID for panel weighting is that it allows correction of non-response using not only information available on the sample but also the answers given by respondents at the initial wave. A full technical report on the survey will be available shortly on the DWP website¹².

1.4 Policy context

1.4.1 The introduction of ESA

ESA was introduced on 27 October 2008 for new claimants to replace IB and IS received on the grounds of incapacity, as a response to the welfare reform Green Paper *A new deal for welfare* (2008). Existing incapacity benefits claimants are currently being reassessed for ESA, in a national programme which is expected to be complete by 2014. Key features of ESA include:

- An expectation that claimants prepare for a return to work, with the majority of customers who are successful in their ESA claim allocated to a **WRAG**¹³. These customers receive £26.75 per week in addition to the basic allowance of £67.50 per week, providing they comply with requirements for work-related activity which involve attending a number of WFIs with an employment adviser. Those people whose illness or disability most severely affects their ability to undertake work-related activity are allocated to the SG. They are not required to carry out any activity in order to receive their full benefit entitlement, which is an additional £32.35 on top of the basic allowance, a total of £96.85 per week.
- A **WCA** replaces the Personal Capability Assessment (PCA) which was used to determine eligibility for IB. Far fewer customers are exempt from assessment under the WCA than under the PCA regime, and the threshold for eligibility is higher than under the PCA.
- The process aims to provide a **quicker assessment for customers**, with a decision on eligibility by week 14 of the claim. This decision is made by DWP, taking into account the result of the WCA conducted by an Atos Healthcare Professional (HCP)¹⁴.
- A **Work-Focused Health-Related Assessment (WFHRA)** is carried out by an HCP who may be a doctor, nurse or physiotherapist. This is intended to: explore customers' views about moving into work and their perceptions about their disabling condition; and identify workplace interventions that facilitate engagement in work.¹⁵

¹¹ CHAID is an acronym that stands for Chi-squared Automatic Interaction Detection. CHAID uses chi-squared statistics to identify optimal splits or groups of independent variables to predict the outcome of dependent variables (e.g. whether a claimant takes part in a follow-up survey).

¹² <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp>

¹³ See Appendix A for a simplified diagram of the claim process.

¹⁴ When ESA was introduced, most customers attended a WFI at week nine of their claim. However, only customers placed in the WRAG following completion of their WCA are now required to attend WFIs.

¹⁵ The WFHRA is suspended for two years from July 2010.

- **Sanctions** – if those in the WRAG do not comply with the regime, they may be sanctioned 50 per cent of the work-related addition, of £26.75. If they have not complied after another four weeks, they receive another sanction of the remaining 50 per cent of this addition.

1.4.2 The Work Programme

The intention to replace all existing welfare to work programmes with a single programme had been signalled in the Conservative party manifesto¹⁶ for the 2010 General Election, and was confirmed in the Coalition Government agreement¹⁷. The Spending Review 2010, announced on 20 October 2010, set out the Department's commitment to the introduction of the Work Programme and it is aimed to have this in place nationally from the summer of 2011.

The Work Programme will replace most existing programmes for unemployed people and will also be available to those on ESA. ESA claimants, including those in the SG, will have access to the Work Programme at any time following their WCA, on a voluntary basis. In addition, all ESA customers in the WRAG will be referred to the Work Programme on a mandatory basis, if they are expected to be FFW in three months at their initial, or repeat, WCA¹⁸. For more detailed information on the Work Programme, see the most recent prospectus on the DWP website¹⁹.

1.4.3 The evaluation of ESA

In addition to this report, and that of the previous customer survey, DWP has also published two reports of qualitative ESA evaluation research with customers and staff, on early implementation experiences of ESA²⁰, and on the WCA and WFHRA²¹. A further qualitative study on the experiences of those are found FFW, or whose claim is closed or withdrawn before Jobcentre Plus make a decision about it, will be published in the DWP research report series in summer 2011.

1.5 Reporting by claim group

As described above, ESA claimants are assigned to different claim outcome groups, with those in the WRAG expected to take part in work-related activity. We have, therefore, sought to report key findings by claim group to reflect differing expectations and outcomes of those in the SG, WRAG or FFW groups.

At the baseline survey it was initially expected that groups would be assigned based on individuals' responses to the survey questions. At the point of analysis, however, it was clear from survey responses there was a significant amount of confusion among claimants about which claim group they were in. This was clear from comparisons with their status at the time the sample was drawn,

¹⁶ http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Jobs_and_Welfare.aspx

¹⁷ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/coalition_programme_for_government.pdf

¹⁸ Or if they received a six month prognosis at their initial repeat WCA, and are due for reassessment within three months.

¹⁹ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/work-prog-prospectus-v2.pdf>

²⁰ Barnes, H., Sissons, P., Aston, J., Dewson, S., Stevens, H., Williams, C. and Francis, R. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Early implementation experiences of customers and staff*. DWP Research Report No. 631.

²¹ Barnes, H., Aston, J. and Williams, C. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Customer and staff experiences of the face-to-face Work Capability Assessment and Work-Focused Health-Related Assessment*. DWP Research Report No. 719.

as well as responses to questions²². As the level of discrepancies was so pronounced, it was decided to use matched administrative data on ESA claims held by DWP in order to assign cases accurately. Respondents were asked at the time of the survey whether they would consent to the linking of their survey responses to benefits data held by DWP. At the Wave 1 survey a total of 3,075 out of 3,650 individuals in the Wave 1 survey consented to this; at the Wave 2 survey the figure was 1,637 out of 1,842.

DWP administrative data records the date of the end of a claimant's assessment period, as well as the DWP Decision Maker's decision about claim outcome. For those cases not consenting to data-linking, responses to the survey question about their current ESA status were used, and in some cases were adjusted using questions on whether they had had a WCA and whether they reported that they were still claiming ESA.

For this report, in some tables and where noted, the claim groups have been updated from those assigned at the baseline. There were a number of reasons which made updating the claim groups for this wave important:

- A significant number of those who were found FFW at Wave 1 had, by Wave 2, successfully appealed that decision and been subsequently placed in the WRAG. It was, therefore, felt to be important that these were treated as WRAG rather than FFW cases in this round of reporting. This also has implications for the characteristics of these groups at Wave 2; they look less similar than at Wave 1, with those in the WRAG reporting more health problems at the follow-up survey.
- At Wave 1, 11 per cent of the cases reported were still in progress, meaning that they were receiving ESA at the assessment rate and had not yet been allocated to a claim group. For Wave 2 groups these cases have been assigned to claim groups based on the administrative data.²³

The Wave 2 groups were assigned in a similar manner to those in Wave 1. Where consent to data-linking was provided at both waves, administrative data were used to assign claim groups²⁴. The data used included information on appeals and on subsequent WCAs. Most respondents consented to data-linking (89 per cent at Wave 2). Where data-linking consent was not provided, the previous claim group data was used. Figure 1.1 shows the weighted sample sizes for each claim group at

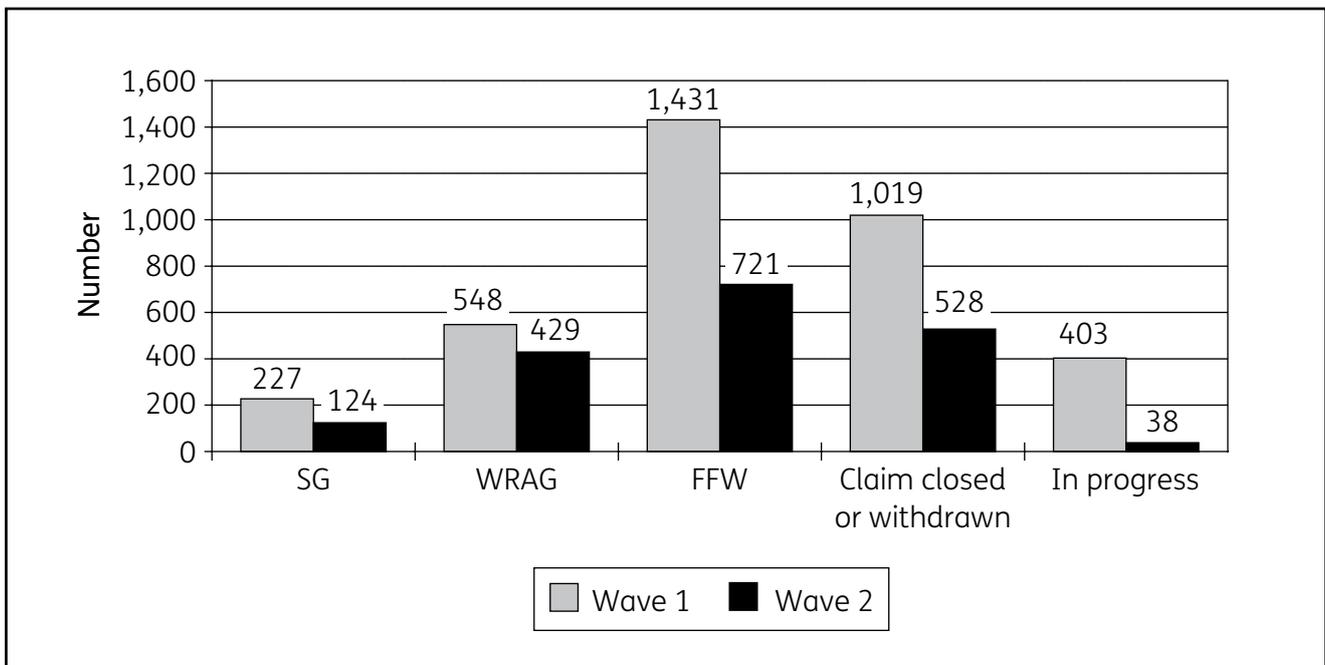
²² This is also consistent with the findings of the ESA evaluation early implementation study. Barnes, H., Sissons, P. and Stevens, H. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Findings from a face-to-face survey of customers*. DWP Research Report No. 707.

²³ There were 33 (38 weighted) cases where it was not possible to assign a claim group, primarily because of absence of administrative data. These are included in the tables which report for all respondents, but do not appear in claim group tables.

²⁴ As with Wave 1, the claim group assigned will represent a claimant's position at their most recent WCA or successful appeal (up to the date of the survey). It should be noted that for the FFW and claim closed/withdrawn groups there are a number of respondents who had 'looped' back around, and made a subsequent claim for ESA. Administrative data was used for those consenting to data-linking to show where subsequent claims have been made. As their data at the follow-up survey relates to a new claim for ESA the original claim group has not been reassigned in these cases. In addition, a number of these reclaims will still be in the assessment phase, meaning we cannot tell the outcome of their claim from administrative data. Of those who consented to data-linking and who were in the FFW group at Wave 2, seven per cent had an active subsequent ESA claim at the time of the survey; for the claim closed or withdrawn group the figure was five per cent. The result of this is likely to be that some measures (for example, the level of ill-health in the FFW group) will be slightly overestimated compared to the position if these groups were excluded.

both waves of the survey. Note that the unweighted base (not shown here) for the SG is almost three times that of the weighted base, and that findings are, therefore, more robust than sometimes small cell sizes might imply²⁵.

Figure 1.1 Weighted sample sizes by claim group, Wave 1 and Wave 2 surveys



²⁵ This is because the SG was deliberately over-sampled relative to their incidence in the claimant population, to permit robust analysis, and then re-weighted to the population of all people who made an initial claim for ESA. The technical report on the survey provides more information.

2 Changes in circumstances since the baseline survey

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the changes in circumstances experienced by those who took part in both waves of the survey, in relation to their personal and household circumstances, their health, and their ESA claim status. Other changes, such as returning to work, are discussed later in the report, in Chapter 4.

2.2 Changes in household and personal circumstances

As Table 2.1 shows, three-quarters of respondents (74 per cent) reported that they had experienced no substantial changes in their personal or household circumstances between the baseline and follow-up survey. Of those who did report a change in their circumstances, the most commonly-reported changes were going on a training course (ten per cent), house moves (seven per cent), separation from a partner (four per cent), children or stepchildren leaving home (three per cent) or obtaining an academic or vocational qualification (both three per cent). These are very similar, both in terms of the types of changes reported and their rank order and magnitude, to those identified in a previous longitudinal survey of IB claimants²⁶.

Table 2.1 Changes in personal and household circumstances

Change reported	%
No significant change	74
Attended training course	10
Moved home	7
Separated from partner	4
Obtained academic qualification	3
Obtained vocational qualification	3
Children or stepchildren left home	3
Had child or acquired stepchild/ren	2
Partnered or re-partnered	1
Other	1
Death in the family	1

Base: All respondents. Multiple response question; responses do not sum to 100 per cent.

Those with a partner (40 per cent of respondents) were asked about their partner's employment status, and any changes to this since the earlier survey. Only ten per cent of those with a partner reported a change in their partner's employment status since the baseline survey. Fifty-eight per cent of those with a partner said their partner was in paid work at the time of the follow-up survey, compared with 50 per cent at the baseline (Table 2.2). Women were more likely to have a working

²⁶ Kemp, P. and Davidson, J. (2008). *Routes onto Incapacity Benefit: Findings from a follow-up survey of recent claimants*. DWP Research Report No. 516.

partner than men, and men were much more likely to have a partner who was a full-time carer or homemaker (20 per cent of men reported this).

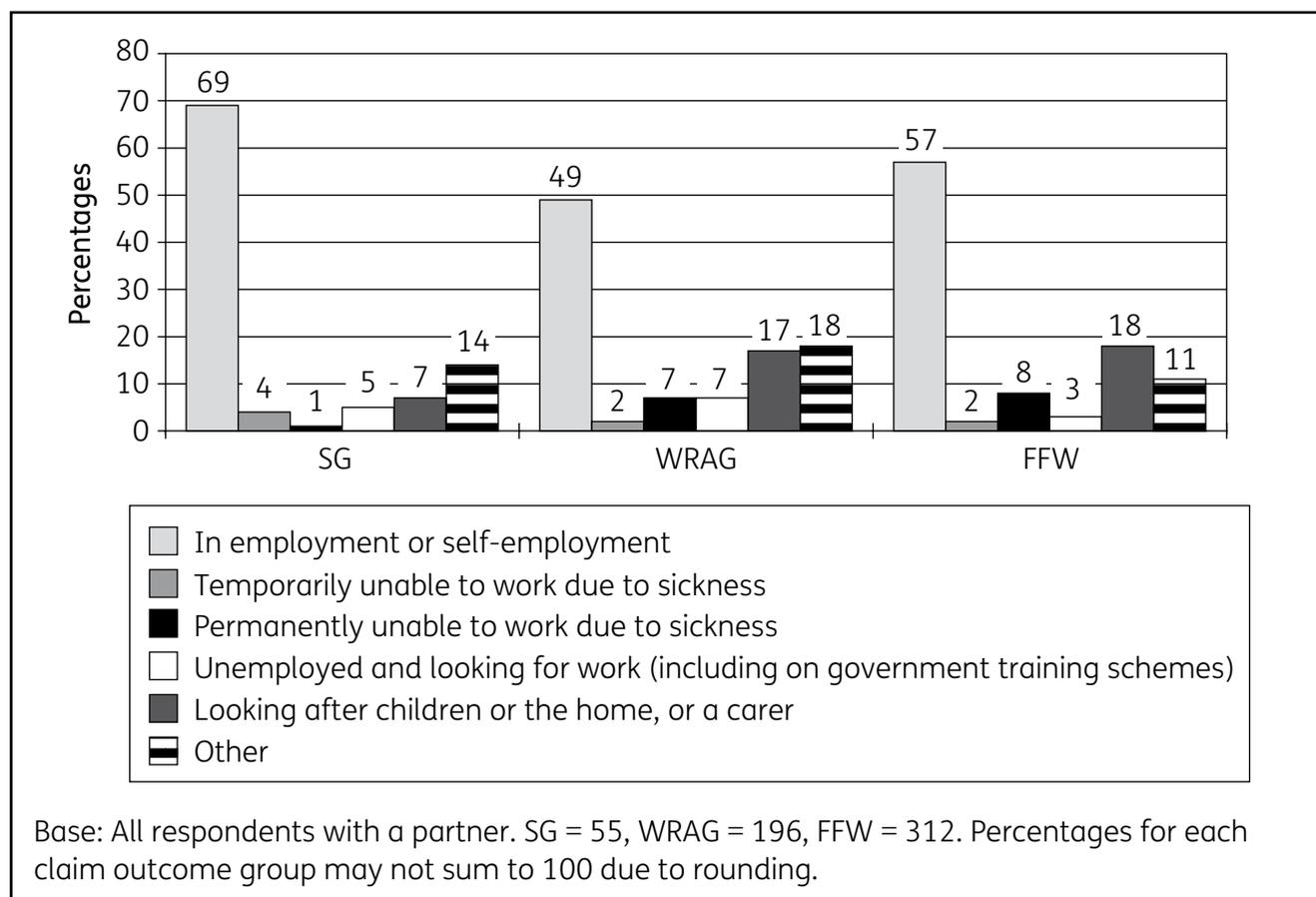
Table 2.2 Partner’s current employment status, by gender

	Male %	Female %	Total %
In employment or self-employment	55	66	58
Temporarily unable to work due to sickness	2	2	2
Permanently unable to work due to sickness	5	9	7
Unemployed and looking for work (including on government training schemes)	3	11	6
Looking after children or the home, or a carer for an older or disabled person	20	4	15
Other	14	8	12
Total	100	100	100
Base	(543)	(277)	(819)

Base: All respondents with a partner. Not all columns sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Looking at partners’ employment status by claim group (Figure 2.1), customers in the SG were much more likely to have a working partner than those in the WRAG or FFW groups, although this was not statistically significant for the latter.

Figure 2.1 Partner’s current employment status, by claim group at Wave 2



2.3 Changes in health status since the baseline survey

Three-quarters of survey respondents reported having a limiting health condition at the baseline survey; this had fallen slightly, to 69 per cent, by the follow-up survey (Table 2.3). Rates of reporting a limiting health condition increased in line with age. Among those still receiving ESA at the time of the follow-up survey, the rate of limiting long-term illness was over 90 per cent, and consistent across all age groups (Table 2.4).

Table 2.3 Limiting long-term health problems at Wave 1 and Wave 2, by age

	16-24 %	25-34 %	35-49 %	50-54 %	55+ %	Total %
Current limiting health problem at Wave 1 (all respondents)	61	73	79	81	79	75
Current health problem or a fluctuating health problem not current at Wave 1 (all respondents)	75	86	89	89	91	87
Current limiting health problem at Wave 2 (all respondents)	48	69	75	74	77	69
Current health problem or a fluctuating health problem not current at Wave 2 (all respondents)	72	83	88	85	89	86
Current limiting health problem at Wave 2 (current ESA recipients only)	91	94	92	93	93	92

Base: Wave 1 (all respondents): 3,635; Wave 2 (all respondents): 1,840; Wave 2 current ESA recipients: 552.

Looking at self-reported health by claim group, Table 2.4 shows that those in the WRAG and SG had the highest rates of limiting health conditions, but that almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of those found FFW also reported such a condition²⁷. The lowest proportion of people reporting a limiting health condition was among those who had a closed or withdrawn claim for ESA.

Table 2.4 Whether has a health problem, disability or long-term illness which limits activities or work they are able to do

	SG %	WRAG %	FFW %	Closed/ withdrawn %	Total %
Yes	93	92	72	41	69
No	7	8	28	59	31
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(124)	(429)	(721)	(528)	(1,802)

Base: All respondents.

The majority of respondents reported some change in their health status since the baseline survey, whether positive or negative, as Table 2.5 demonstrates. Overall, slightly under one-third of respondents (32 per cent) reported that their health had remained the same. Those in younger age groups were more likely to report an improvement in their health, and those in older age groups a

²⁷ Note that the FFW group in the Wave 2 survey excludes those who had been found FFW at the Wave 1 survey but had successfully appealed by Wave 2, who are now in the WRAG.

deterioration; one-third (33 per cent) of those aged 50–54, and 37 per cent of those aged over 55, reported that their health had got worse since the baseline survey, compared with only one in ten (ten per cent) of those aged 16–24.

Table 2.5 Health status at Wave 2 compared with baseline survey, by age group

	16-24 %	25-34 %	35-49 %	50-54 %	55 and over %	Total %
Getting better	32	32	25	19	17	25
Getting worse	10	21	27	33	37	25
Staying the same	39	29	29	32	36	32
Changeable over time	18	18	20	15	11	17
Don't know	[1]	[1]	0	0	0	[1]
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(318)	(338)	(636)	(218)	(332)	(1,841)

Base: All respondents. Not all columns sum to 100 due to rounding.

Looking only at those who reported that they still had a limiting health condition (Table 2.6), overall, less than one in five (18 per cent) reported that their health had improved since the baseline survey. Those with mental health conditions were most likely to report that their health had improved or was changeable over time, and least likely to report a deterioration of their condition. Those with musculo-skeletal problems or injuries and those with ‘other’ conditions (as well as those who did not provide information on their condition) were more likely to report that their health had deteriorated since the baseline.

Table 2.6 Health status compared with baseline, by main health condition²⁸

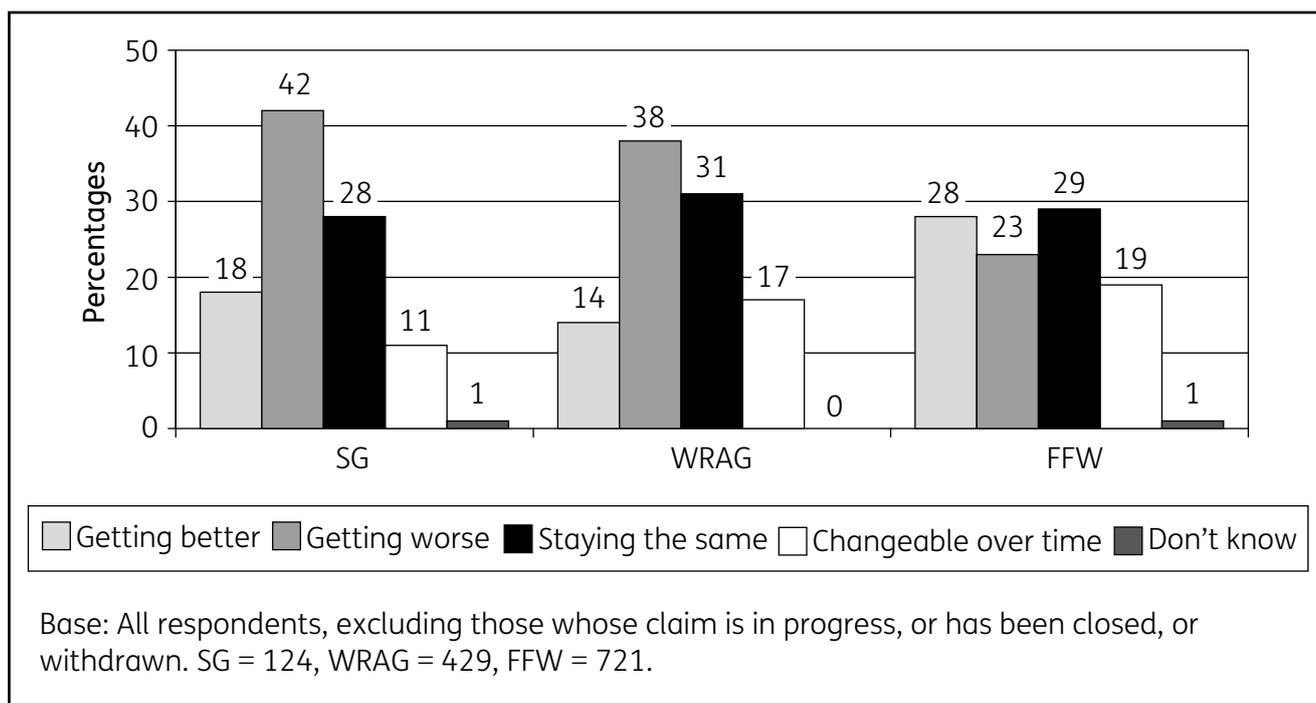
	Mental health conditions %	Musculo-skeletal or injury %	Long-term conditions affecting major organs or the whole body %	Other condition or disability %	Don't know/ prefer not to say %	Total %
Getting better	24	20	22	[7]	[11]	18
Getting worse	15	36	27	42	35	30
Staying the same	26	31	29	31	43	31
Changeable over time	32	13	22	20	[11]	20
Don't know	[2]	0	0	0	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(363)	(562)	(243)	(202)	(135)	(1,505)

Base: All respondents who had a limiting health condition at Wave 2. Not all columns sum to 100 due to rounding.

²⁸ A breakdown of the health conditions covered is provided at Appendix B.

There was a strong association between health status and claim group, as seen in Figure 2.2; those found FFW were twice as likely as those in the WRAG to say that their health had improved since the baseline survey; over a quarter (28 per cent) of the FFW group reported this, compared to 14 per cent of the WRAG.

Figure 2.2 Health status compared with baseline survey, by claim group at Wave 2²⁹

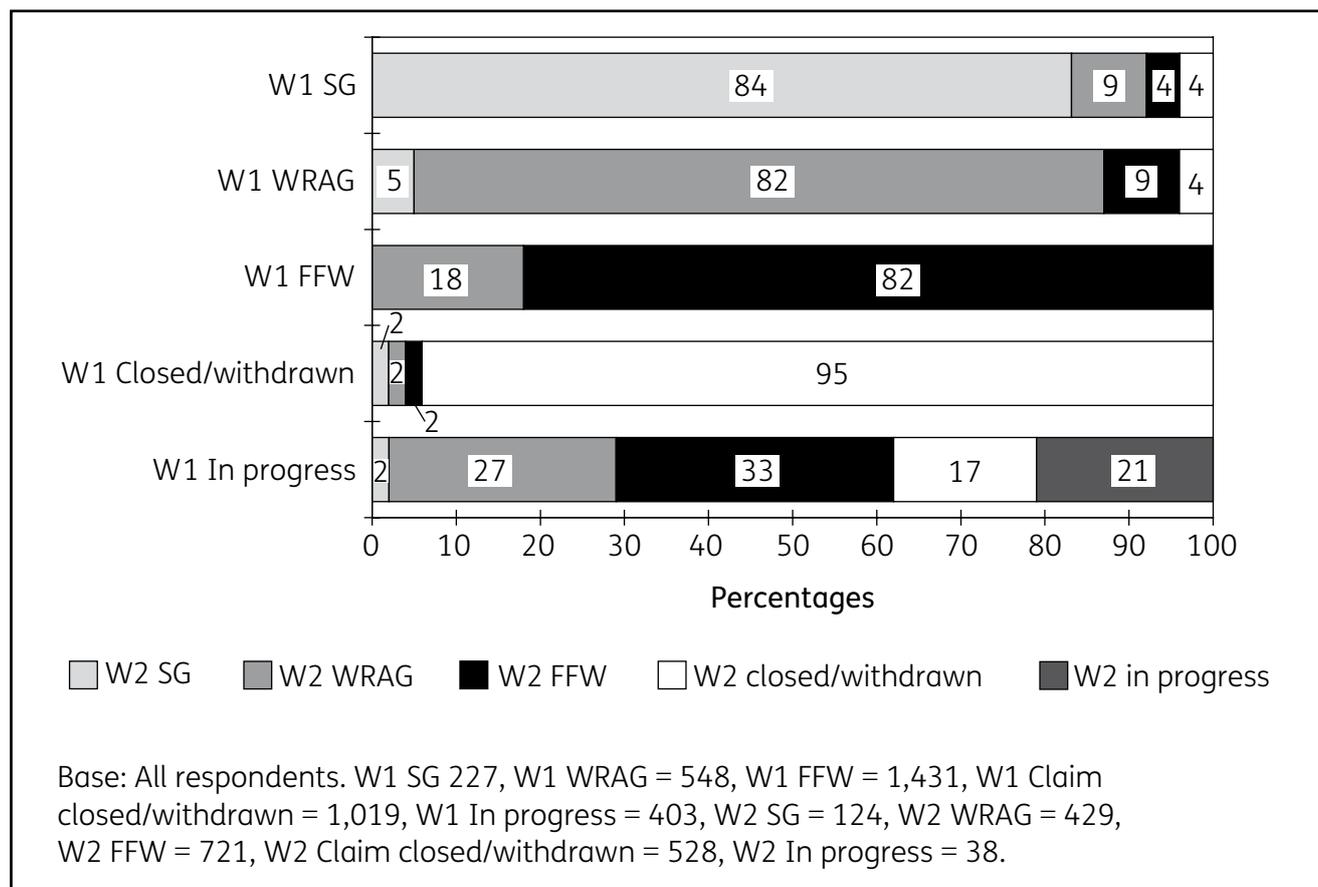


2.4 Changes in Employment and Support Allowance claim status

Figure 2.3 shows the changes in claim group from the baseline to the follow-up survey. With the exception of the ‘in progress’ category, which had almost all been allocated to one of the other claim groups by the time of the follow-up survey, the table shows that over 80 per cent of respondents remained in the same claim group, but that one in six (18 per cent) of those in the FFW group at the baseline were in the WRAG by the follow-up survey, largely due to successful appeals. This implies an increase in the size of the WRAG, and also an increased differentiation between the WRAG and FFW groups (as those with more severe conditions may be likely to move into the WRAG) which needs to be borne in mind when looking at the substantive findings. Although there was some evidence of other movement between groups, the numbers involved were much smaller and, therefore, had a limited impact on the overall composition of claim groups.

²⁹ Again, this excludes those who were categorised as FFW at the baseline survey, but had successfully appealed their FFW status and moved into the WRAG by the follow-up survey.

Figure 2.3 Changes in claim group from baseline (W1) to follow-up (W2) survey



For most people receiving ESA, this was the same claim as at the baseline survey. As Table 2.7 shows, only five per cent and one per cent respectively for the WRAG and SGs were on their second ESA claim.

Table 2.7 Whether this is the same ESA claim as at baseline survey, by those currently receiving ESA at Wave 2

	SG %	WRAG %
Same claim	95	93
Second claim	[1]	5
Don't know	[4]	2
Total	100	100
Base	(86)	(220)

Base: Those currently in receipt of ESA at the Wave 2 survey.

2.5 Changes in other benefits and tax credits received

As with changes in their other domestic and financial circumstances, about three-quarters (73 per cent) of respondents said that they were receiving the same benefits and tax credits as at the baseline survey, as shown in Table 2.8. Of those who were not, some were receiving fewer, and some more, but many had simply moved from one benefit to another. The way the question was structured means that it is difficult to explore this in detail.

Table 2.8 Whether receiving same benefits at baseline and follow-up survey

	Yes %	No %	Don't know %
Whether receiving same benefits as at baseline	73	26	2
Base	(287)	(103)	(3)

Base: All those who were receiving benefits apart from/as well as ESA at Wave 1. Does not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

As shown in Table 2.9, the main benefits received by survey respondents were Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (each accounting for 24 per cent of responses) and benefits for children (Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit), each of which were cited by 20 per cent of customers.

Table 2.9 Which benefits (other than ESA) are currently being received

Benefit	%
Council Tax Benefit	24
Housing Benefit	24
Child Benefit	20
Child Tax Credit	20
Jobseeker's Allowance	12
Disability Living Allowance (care component)	11
Disability Living Allowance (mobility component)	10
Disability Living Allowance (unknown component)	3
Working Tax Credit	7
No other benefits	38
Base	(178)

Base: Those who were receiving benefits apart from/as well as ESA at Wave 1. Multiple response question; total does not sum to 100 per cent. Benefits where response was less than five per cent excluded, excepting Disability Living Allowance.

2.6 Conclusions

Customers generally reported few changes in their domestic and personal circumstances between the baseline and follow-up survey – three-quarters said nothing had changed. Health was more likely than other circumstances to have changed, and overall, was as likely to have deteriorated as improved. For those in older age groups, health was more likely to have deteriorated than improved, while the reverse was true for younger respondents.

Claim group tended to remain stable across both waves of the survey; excluding ‘in progress’ claims at the baseline survey, over 80 per cent were still in their original claim group. A sizeable proportion (18 per cent) of the FFW group at the baseline survey had moved into the WRAG as a result of successful appeals by the time of the follow-up survey. The vast majority (over 90 per cent) of those still receiving ESA at Wave 2 were in the same claim as the baseline survey.

3 The Employment and Support Allowance claim process

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the experiences of those whose ESA claim outcome had not been decided at the time of the face-to-face survey, and sets these in the context of the customer experiences in the baseline survey report³⁰. The baseline survey reported experiences and views of the WCA in detail. Because most respondents had already had a WCA and were asked about this at the baseline survey, it is not possible to replicate this level of detail in this report. This chapter also looks at ongoing ESA claim experiences for all claim groups, such as WFIs, repeat WCAs, appeals, and views on sanctions.

3.2 Claims which were in progress at the baseline survey

3.2.1 The face-to-face Work Capability Assessment

Most (87 per cent) of those interviewed for the baseline survey had already had a face-to-face WCA when initially interviewed. Of those who had not had a WCA at the baseline survey, 52 per cent had gone on to do so by the follow-up survey, as shown in Table 3.1. The main reason for not having had one was being allocated to the SG³¹ (42 per cent), and a further 19 per cent had an appointment for one, but one-third (33 per cent) reported that they had simply not heard anything about a WCA³².

Slightly under half of those attending a WCA since the baseline survey reported having a physical examination (Table 3.2); this is broadly comparable to the baseline survey (51 per cent).

As at the baseline survey³³, customers were asked for their views on how well the HCP conducting their face-to-face WCA had understood their situation, but the base numbers were too small to be reliably disaggregated. Similarly, the base numbers for reasons why customers felt that the HCP had not understood their condition, and views on the accuracy of the WCA report were too small to permit reliable analysis, as the responses covered a wide range. The report of the baseline survey³⁴ discusses why people had not felt well understood by the HCP at their face-to-face WCA; these

³⁰ Barnes, H., Sissons, P. and Stevens, H. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Findings from a face-to-face survey of customers*. DWP Research Report No. 707.

³¹ Those who are terminally ill and those with certain severe conditions are assessed on the basis of documentary medical evidence and not required to attend a WCA.

³² Note that the base numbers for these latter two categories were too small for reliable inferences to be drawn.

³³ Barnes, H., Sissons, P. and Stevens, H. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Findings from a face-to-face survey of customers*. DWP Research Report No. 707.

³⁴ Barnes, H., Aston, J. and Williams, C. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Customer and staff experiences of the face-to-face Work Capability Assessment and Work-Focused Health-Related Assessment*. DWP Research Report No. 719.

views appeared to be linked to the outcome of their assessment, with those found FFW more likely to feel this way, although this view was not restricted to this group. Qualitative research on the WCA undertaken as part of the ESA evaluation also provides further information on people’s views and experiences of attending a face-to-face assessment³⁵.

Table 3.1 Whether had WCA, and reasons if not

	Total %
Have you had a WCA?	
Yes	52
No	44
Don't know	[5]
Total	100
Base	(167)
Why have you not had a WCA?	
I have been told I don't need to have this (SG)	42
I have an appointment but have not attended yet	[19]
I've not heard anything about this	[33]
Don't know	[6]
Total	100
Base	[73]

Base: Those who had not had a WCA at baseline survey.

Table 3.2 Experiences of the WCA

	Total %
Was there a physical examination?	
Yes	46
No	51
Don't know	[3]
Total	100
Base	(87)

Base: Those who had not had a WCA at baseline survey, and have subsequently had one.

3.3 Changes since baseline survey

The follow-up survey also asked those who already had a decision on their ESA claim at the time of the baseline survey about any additional claim experiences. These are discussed in the following sections.

³⁵ Ibid.

3.3.1 Experiences of the Work Capability Assessment

Just under one-third (30 per cent) of those whose claim outcome was already known at the baseline survey had another WCA by the time of the second survey (Table 3.3); the highest rate was among the WRAG.

Table 3.3 Whether customers had had an additional face-to-face WCA since baseline survey

	SG %	WRAG %	FFW %	Total %
Yes	[15]	35	[24]	30
No	85	56	71	63
Don't know	0	[8]	[5]	7
Total	100	100	100	100
Base	(48)	(325)	(196)	(569)

Base: Those who had a face-to-face WCA at baseline survey, and have subsequently had another. Not all columns sum to 100 due to rounding.

As Table 3.4 shows, 61 per cent of those attending a repeat WCA reported having a physical examination, and 82 per cent reported seeing a doctor.

Table 3.4 Experiences of repeat face-to-face WCA

	%
Was there a physical examination?	
Yes	61
No	37
Don't know	2
Base	(179)
Which type of HCP were they seen by?	
Doctor	82
Nurse	19
Physiotherapist	3
Don't know	6
Base	(152)

Base: For physical examination question the base was those who had a face-to-face WCA at the baseline survey, and had subsequently had another.

For type of HCP seen the base was those who had a face-to-face WCA at baseline survey, had subsequently had another, and had a physical examination at the WCA. The latter does not sum to 100 per cent as people may have seen more than one type of HCP.

3.4 Experiences of Work-Focused Interviews

Table 3.5 shows the total number of WFIs attended by claim group, excluding those whose claim was closed or withdrawn before a decision on it was made. It shows that half of the FFW and WRAG groups had attended at least four WFIs, with close to a third of those in both these groups attending six or more. It is difficult to interpret this rather high rate of attendance by those in the FFW group; it may be attributable to delays in receiving a decision on the ESA claim for this relatively early cohort of claimants, the high appeal rate among the FFW group, intensive work with providers in the initial phase of the claim, or simply that claimants are not distinguishing between the ESA WFIs and JSA interviews. These are all issues which have been identified by the qualitative strand of the evaluation³⁶.

Table 3.5 Total numbers of WFI by Wave 2, by Wave 2 claim group

Total number of WFIs by Wave 2	SG %	WRAG %	FFW %
0	[15]	17	15
1	[17]	14	[11]
2-3	[46]	19	25
4-5	[7]	21	19
6 or more	[15]	29	31
Total	100	100	100
Base	(41)	(281)	(261)

Base: Those in W2 survey who were still receiving ESA at Wave 1 and who had attended, on been asked to attend, a WFI at either Wave 1 or Wave 2. Not all columns sum to 100 due to rounding.

As in the baseline survey, the vast majority of people across claim groups rated their adviser as very or fairly helpful (Table 3.6). There was little difference across these ratings by whether this was the first or most recent meeting.

³⁶ Barnes, H., Sissons, P., Aston, J., Dewson, S., Stevens, H., Williams, C. and Francis, R. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Early implementation experiences of customers and staff*. DWP Research Report No. 631.

Table 3.6 How helpful did you find the adviser? Was it...

	At first meeting %	At most recent meeting %
Very helpful	64	65
Fairly helpful	23	26
Not very helpful	6	5
Not at all helpful	6	3
Don't know	1	0
Refused	0	0
Total	100	100
Base	(253)	(197)

Base: Those attending WFIs since Wave 1. Not all columns sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 3.7 shows what people recalled discussing in WFIs; health and the type of work wanted were the highest, accounting respectively for 47 and 44 per cent of responses. The rank order is very similar to that reported at the baseline survey, although the proportions mentioning each item are somewhat lower.

Table 3.7 What was discussed in WFIs

	%
Health and how it affects work	47
Type of work wanted	44
Training/work experience/Permitted Work	22
How might apply for jobs	20
Services from other organisations to help find work	5
Help managing health condition	4
Helping to build confidence about finding work	3
Base	(525)

Base: Those who had attended at least one WFI since Wave 1. Multiple response question; does not sum to 100 per cent.

The majority of those attending WFIs reported that these were helping in thinking about paid work in the future (Figure 3.1), and this did not vary significantly across claim group.

Looking at the perceived value of WFIs in thinking about paid work by the number of WFIs attended, this was generally high, but did not appear to be related to the number of WFIs attended (Table 3.8) and again this did not vary significantly by claim group.

Figure 3.1 How helpful were WFIs in thinking about paid work in the future, by claim group

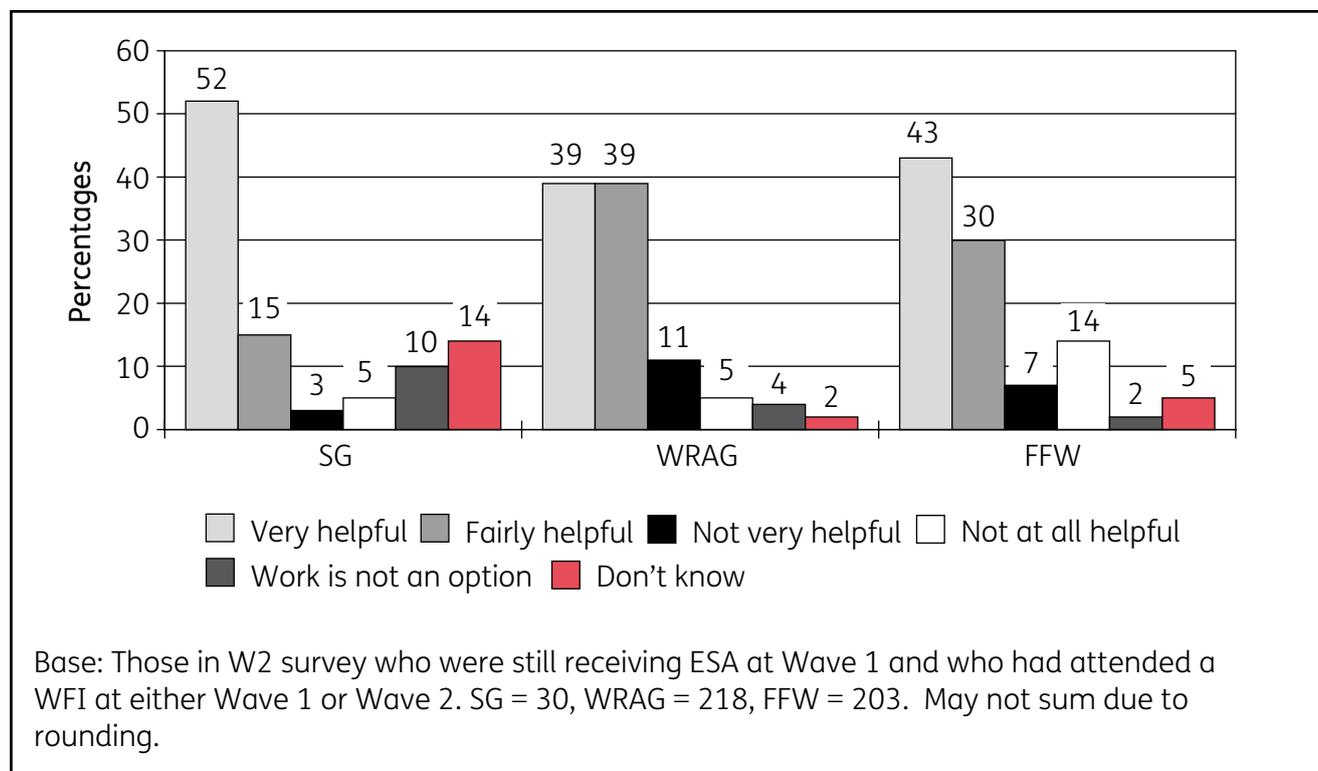


Table 3.8 How would you rate the meetings in terms of thinking about paid work in the future? Would you say it was/they were...

	Total number of WFIs by Wave 2				Total %
	1 %	2-3 %	4-5 %	6 or more %	
Very helpful	33	40	46	45	42
Fairly helpful	42	38	34	30	35
Not very helpful	4	6	7	11	8
Not at all helpful	13	7	6	10	9
Do not apply because already had job lined up	0	0	0	1	0
Do not apply because work is not an option	4	6	1	2	3
Don't know	3	3	7	1	3
Refused	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(88)	(155)	(142)	(183)	(568)

Base: Those in W2 survey who were still receiving ESA at Wave 1 and who had attended a WFI at either Wave 1 or Wave 2. Not all columns sum to 100 due to rounding.

Respondents were asked to state their agreement with a series of statements intended to gauge their attitudes to work. Looking at these statements (Table 3.9), it is clear that some of them commanded a stronger level of agreement than others, and that although this varied by the number of WFIs attended, there was no underlying relationship. There were high levels of agreement with the statements ‘having a job is the best way for me to be an independent person’ (85 per cent) and ‘once you’ve got a job it’s very important to hang on to it, even if you don’t really like it’ (77 per cent). However, there was less consensus about being prepared to ‘take any job I can do’ (64 per cent) or needing to ‘have a job to feel a full member of society’ (60 per cent), and just under half of respondents (47 per cent) agreed that ‘being in work helps my health’.

Looking at work orientation only for the WRAG attending WFIs (Table 3.10), a similar pattern emerges. In addition, those who had been out of work prior to claiming were somewhat less inclined to agree that a person needs a job to be a full member of society.

3.4.1 Views and experiences of sanctions

As at the baseline survey, awareness of sanctions was widespread, but knowledge of how they were applied was not always accurate, in that many people thought that their benefit could be stopped, rather than reduced, for non attendance at WFIs. The small base numbers involved means that this data cannot be reliably disaggregated. Only a small minority of people (eight per cent) said they had actually been sanctioned. As Table 3.11 shows, men were more likely than women to report that an awareness of the compulsory nature of WFIs made them more likely to attend; more women reported that they would have attended anyway.

Table 3.9 Work orientation by number of WFIs attended

	0 %	1 %	2-3 %	4-5 %	6 or more %	Total %
I am prepared to take any job I can do						
Agree ¹	57	73	65	63	63	64
Disagree	29	22	30	31	25	28
Neither agree nor disagree	10	1	3	1	9	5
Don't know	3	2	0	4	3	2
Refused	0	1	2	1	0	1
Being in work helps my health						
Agree	41	47	54	49	44	47
Disagree	45	33	28	31	37	35
Neither agree nor disagree	10	13	7	10	11	10
Don't know	5	6	8	9	8	7
Refused	0	2	2	1	0	1
Once you've got a job it's very important to hang on to it even if you don't really like it						
Agree	69	79	80	78	80	77
Disagree	25	16	12	16	17	17
Neither agree nor disagree	6	2	5	4	2	4
Don't know	1	1	1	2	1	1
Refused	0	1	1	1	0	1
Having a job is the best way for me to be an independent person						
Agree	83	90	85	81	88	85
Disagree	9	5	5	8	6	6
Neither agree nor disagree	6	1	4	10	4	5
Don't know	1	3	5	1	2	2
Refused	0	1	1	0	0	0
A person must have a job to feel a full member of society						
Agree	52	56	67	62	60	60
Disagree	43	37	23	28	27	30
Neither agree nor disagree	1	2	7	5	12	6
Don't know	5	5	1	5	2	3
Refused	0	1	2	0	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(110)	(87)	(154)	(139)	(185)	(676)

Base: Those who were still receiving ESA at Wave 1 and who had attended, or been asked to attend, a WFI at either Wave 1 or Wave 2. Not all column totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

¹ In the original question, respondents were able to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed, but these have been summed here to maximise base sizes.

Table 3.10 Attitudes to work, WRAG, by work status prior to ESA claim

	Working before claiming ESA %	Not working before claiming ESA %	Total %
I am prepared to take any job I can do			
Agree	51	62	56
Disagree	33	28	31
Neither agree nor disagree	14	4	9
Don't know	2	4	3
Refused	0	2	1
Being in work helps my health			
Agree	45	52	48
Disagree	33	27	30
Neither agree nor disagree	11	13	12
Don't know	10	7	8
Refused	0	2	1
Once you've got a job it's very important to hang on to it even if you don't really like it			
Agree	73	77	75
Disagree	17	19	18
Neither agree nor disagree	7	2	5
Don't know	2	2	2
Refused	0	1	0
Having a job is the best way for me to be an independent person			
Agree	87	81	84
Disagree	5	5	5
Neither agree nor disagree	6	8	7
Don't know	2	5	4
Refused	0	1	0
A person must have a job to feel a full member of society			
Agree	65	50	57
Disagree	25	32	30
Neither agree nor disagree	8	13	11
Don't know	1	2	1
Refused	0	1	0
Total	100	100	100
Base	(147)	(134)	(281)

Base: Those who were still receiving ESA at Wave 1 and who had attended, or been asked to attend a WFI, at either Wave 1 or Wave 2. Not all column totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 3.11 Whether agree that compulsory nature of WFIs makes them more likely to attend, by gender

	Male %	Female %	Total %
Agree strongly	59	64	61
Agree slightly	[33]	[9]	22
Neither agree nor disagree	0	[3]	[1]
Disagree slightly	[3]	[6]	[4]
Disagree strongly	[3]	[8]	[5]
Don't know	[2]	[11]	6
Total	100	100	100
Base	(68)	(56)	(124)

Base: Respondents who had started to attend WFIs since the baseline survey, and were aware that these were compulsory. Not all totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

3.4.2 Appeals

Methodology

The appeals success data which are presented in this section draw on information from DWP administrative data about individuals' benefit claims, rather than the self-reported data from the survey. In cases where respondents gave their permission, survey responses were linked with administrative data, making information on appeal outcomes highly accurate. Comparisons between the administrative data and survey responses show that respondents were significantly less likely to report they had appealed when the decision was not in their favour. For this reason the section reports on linked data cases only. The drawback to this approach, however, is that survey questions were routed based on individuals' responses to the questions on appeals. This means that information presented on appeals is skewed towards decisions in favour of customers. This is an important caveat to the findings presented in this section.

Appeal views and experiences

Asked why they had appealed (Table 3.12), over half of responses indicated that the person had disagreed with the decision on their claim. A further 15 per cent of responses specially mentioned that the medical assessment was felt to be unfairly or wrongly applied, and the same proportion mentioned ongoing health problems. Ten per cent said that they had been advised to appeal by someone else, such as their General Practitioner (GP), the CAB or a Trades Union.

At the baseline survey, 20 per cent of customers found FFW had appealed, and the majority (67 per cent) were still awaiting the outcome of their appeal (Table 3.13). Almost all of these appeals had been decided by the time of the follow-up survey. Of those who had appealed and received an appeal decision, 46 per cent had received a decision in their favour, 54 per cent had been found in favour of the DWP³⁷.

³⁷ This is broadly in line with the 60 per cent found in favour of DWP in official ESA statistics. See http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/esa_wca_25012011.pdf

Fifty-four per cent of the respondents who consented to data-linking reported that they had received some form of help with their appeal³⁸. Respondents who had received help were much more likely to have won their appeal (70 per cent were successful, compared to 41 per cent who received no help)³⁹.

Where respondents had received help with their appeal, the most common form of support was through the CAB or other advice centre (48 per cent), as Table 3.15 shows. A sizeable proportion also received help from a friend or relative (30 per cent) and a smaller number from a GP or health professional (20 per cent).

Table 3.12 Why people had appealed

	%
Disagreed with the decision/assessment/result	56
The medical/assessment was not carried out properly/fairly	15
Ongoing health problems/still in pain	15
Advised by someone else (e.g. doctor, CAB, Jobcentre Plus, Union)	10
Points total was too low/incorrect	8
Other	8
Benefit payments were stopped/about to be stopped	6
Don't know/did not reply	5
Too many inconsistencies in the report	2
Was on the lower rate and wanted to obtain the higher rate	1
They did not understand the condition	1
Base	(440)

Base: Those who had appealed. Multiple response question, total does not sum to 100 per cent.

Table 3.13 Appeal outcomes

	Total
Appealing at baseline (% of all appeals)	20
Appeal decided at baseline (% of all appeals)	33
Appeal decided at follow-up (% of all appeals)	97
Decided in favour of claimant by follow-up survey (% of all appeals)	46
Decided in favour of DWP by follow-up survey (% of all appeals)	54
Base	(284)

Base: All who had appealed a decision on their ESA claim.

³⁸ Those who did not consent to data linking are excluded from this analysis because of the inaccurate self-reporting about appeals noted above.

³⁹ It should be noted however that this figure is likely to be affected by the missing data from those who had appealed but did not report this in the survey, and whose responses are therefore absent from routed questions.

Table 3.14 Success with appeals by whether received help

	Had help with appeal %	Had no help with appeal %
Appeal successful	70	41
Appeal not successful	30	59
Total	100	100
Base	(111)	(96)

Base: All who had appealed a decision on their ESA claim.

Table 3.15 Who helped the customer appeal?

	Total %
CAB or other advice centre	48
Friend or relative	30
Doctor or other health professional	[20]
Other	[5]
Welfare rights officer/adviser	[4]
Jobcentre Plus adviser	[4]
Don't know	[3]
Social/support worker	[1]
Base	(111)

Base: Those who had appealed and had help with their appeal. Multiple response question, does not sum to 100 per cent.

3.5 Conclusions

The claim experiences reported at the follow-up survey largely mirror those of the baseline survey. Most respondents in the WRAG and FFW groups had attended four or more WFIs. Experiences and views of WFIs were very positive, as before, with personal advisers rated as helpful, and WFIs viewed as helpful in thinking about paid work in the future.

There was no evidence of a relationship between attitudes to work and the number of WFIs attended. There was no significant difference between levels of agreement of those in the WRAG, and all those who had attended WFIs as a whole. Turning to appeals, just under half (46 per cent) were decided in the claimant's favour, which is broadly in line with the 40 per cent recorded in official statistics. The most common reason given for appealing was feeling the decision made on their claim was unfair, cited by 56 per cent. Having help from someone appears to have been associated with appeal success. The CAB or another advice centre was the most-frequently-cited source of help.

4 Destinations of those leaving Employment and Support Allowance

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the initial destinations of those leaving ESA, for instance for employment or another benefit. Longer-term trajectories of those claiming ESA will be discussed in a parallel report, *Routes onto ESA*, due to be published in the DWP research report series shortly. Claims can have ended at any point between the initial claim in April–June 2009 and the date of the follow-up survey (July to September 2010); a large proportion had already ended by the time of the baseline survey, which took place between December 2009 and February 2010.

4.2 Immediate post-claim destinations

People who reported that they had left ESA (whether because they were found FFW, had their claim closed by Jobcentre Plus, or withdrew their claim before receiving a decision) were asked about the main thing they did, immediately after their claim ended. These findings do not report the destinations of some ESA leavers, as they did not report leaving ESA in the survey and consequently were not asked the question about what they did next⁴⁰. As they are concerned with **immediate** post-claim destinations, these data are also not necessarily consistent with the destinations reported at the time of the follow-up survey, which could have been over a year after their ESA claim ended.

Overall, 80 per cent of ESA leavers said they had either claimed another benefit (43 per cent) or moved into work (37 per cent); one fifth said they did something else (Table 4.1). Some in this latter group identified specific activities, such as moving into education, being supported by a partner, or living off savings. Other responses were less specific, for example ‘continuing without benefits’ or ‘don’t know’, and in these cases it was unclear what the customer’s source of income might have been. These destinations are currently being explored by a qualitative study which will be reported in the DWP research report series shortly⁴¹.

⁴⁰ As subsequent questions are routed from this initial question, the survey data also cannot provide destination outcomes for those who incorrectly reported still being in receipt of ESA.

⁴¹ This is provisionally titled *Ended ESA Claims* and will be published in the DWP research report series in summer 2011.

Table 4.1 What ESA leavers did immediately after their claim ended

	FFW %	Closed/ withdrawn %	Total %
Claimed another benefit	48	38	43
Went back to my old job	10	24	17
Got a job/became self-employed	18	23	20
Other, of which:	(25)	(14)	(20)
Unemployed/looking for work	2	3	2
Supported by partner or family/living off savings	2	2	2
Went to college	2	2	2
Appealed ¹	1	0	1
Still too sick to work	1	0	1
Retired	2	0	1
Continued without benefits	4	2	3
Did nothing/don't know/other	11	5	8
Total	100	100	100
Base	(500)	(452)	(952)

Base: FFW and claim closed/withdrawn groups at Wave 2. Not all column totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

¹ Those who successfully appealed and were placed in Wave 2 WRAG were not asked this question. Also, as noted above, unsuccessful appeals were under-reported.

4.3 Changes in employment status by Wave 2

Overall, there were few changes in employment status for the WRAG and SG between the two waves of the survey (Table 4.2). Less than five per cent of either group moved into employment between the baseline and the follow-up survey, and over 90 per cent of the SG and 85 per cent of the WRAG were economically inactive at both waves⁴².

⁴² Although these groups remained on ESA, they can undertake a certain number of hours of Permitted Work per week, and could have been looking for work whilst continuing to claim ESA.

Table 4.2 Changes in employment status between survey waves by Wave 2 claim group

Employment status change	SG %	WRAG %	FFW %	Closed/ withdrawn %
In employment	[4]	[3]	13	30
In employment at both waves				
In employment at Wave 1 and unemployed at Wave 2	[0]	[0]	[1]	[2]
In employment at Wave 1 and other inactive ¹ at Wave 2	[1]	[0]	[1]	[3]
Unemployed	[2]	[5]	18	24
Unemployed at both waves				
Unemployed at Wave 1 and employed at Wave 2	[0]	[0]	8	6
Unemployed at Wave 1 and other inactive at Wave 2	[1]	[1]	[1]	[2]
Other inactive	90	85	49	26
Other inactive at both waves				
Other inactive at Wave 1 and employed at Wave 2	[1]	[4]	5	[5]
Other inactive at Wave 1 and unemployed at Wave 2	[1]	[1]	[3]	[1]
Total	100	100	100	100
Base	(124)	(425)	(718)	(527)

Base: all respondents. Not all column totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

¹ Includes caring, sickness etc.

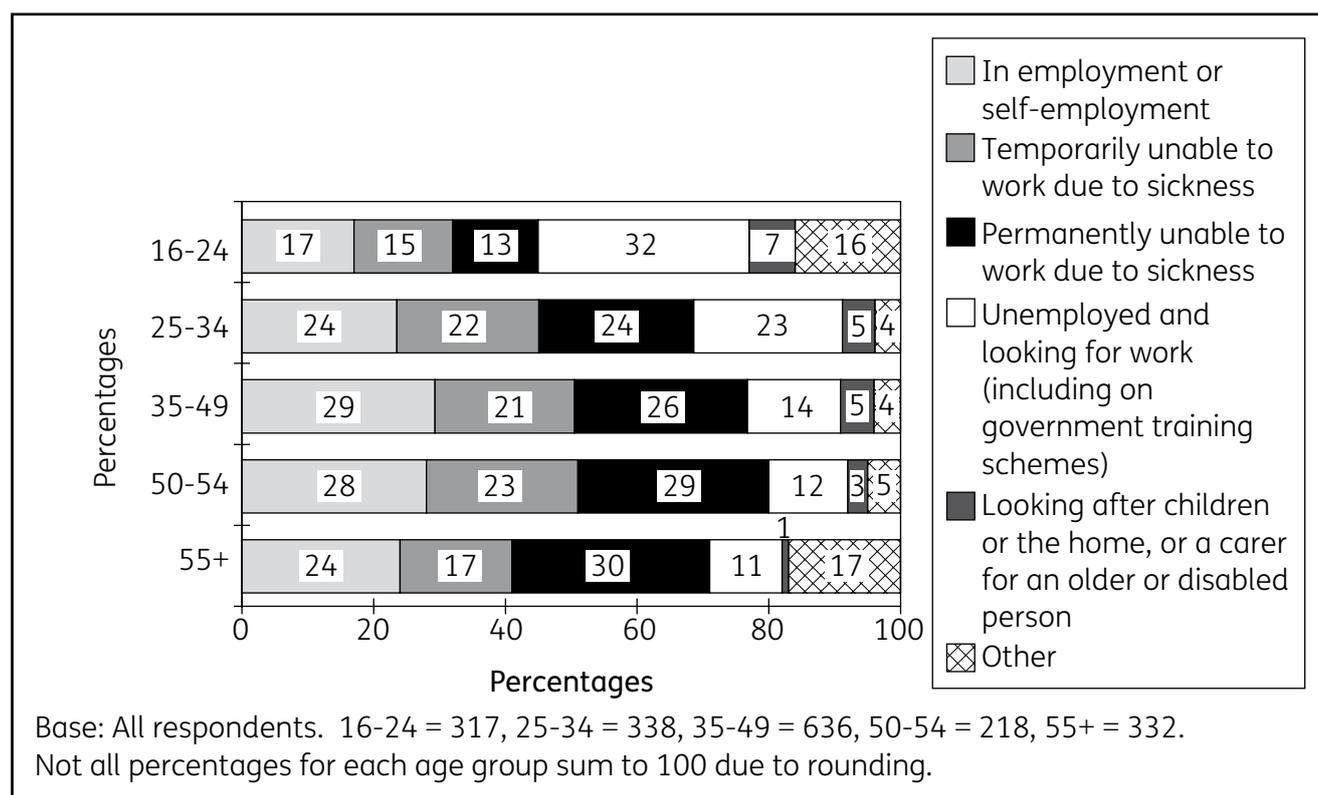
Current employment status at the follow-up survey varied considerably by claim group (Table 4.3). The lowest employment rates were for those in the WRAG (nine per cent) and SG (ten per cent). Of those found FFW, 25 per cent had returned to work by the follow-up survey, but over 40 per cent continued to regard themselves as temporarily (21 per cent) or permanently (23 per cent) unable to work because of ill-health. By contrast, ten per cent of those in the closed/withdrawn group saw themselves as temporarily unable to work, and five per cent as permanently unable to work.

Table 4.3 Employment status at follow-up survey, by baseline survey claim group

	ESA claim group at Wave 1 – final all cases					
	SG %	WRAG %	FFW %	Closed/ withdrawn %	In progress %	Total %
In employment or self employed	10	9	25	39	22	25
Temporarily sick	25	23	21	10	29	19
Permanently off work due to sickness or disability	43	55	23	5	26	25
Unemployed and looking for work - including those on government training scheme	3	5	21	27	12	18
Looking after children or the home or care giving	4	1	3	9	4	4
Other	16	8	7	10	7	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(113)	(277)	(760)	(504)	(186)	(1,840)

Base: All respondents Wave 2. Not all column totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

As at the baseline survey, those in the youngest age groups were least likely to be in paid work, and most likely to be unemployed, at the time of the follow-up survey, as can be seen in Figure 4.1. Almost one-third (32 per cent) of those under 25 said they were unemployed and looking for work, and almost a quarter (23 per cent) of those aged 25-34.

Figure 4.1 Current employment status at follow-up survey, by age


For most respondents who had started working by the time of the follow-up survey, this was either to the same job as before they were ill (39 per cent) or to a similar job (26 per cent); around one-third (35 per cent) had completely changed occupation. As Figure 4.2 shows, men were more likely than women to return to the same job. These responses were also analysed by age group and by occupation, but the base numbers were too small to reliably disaggregate these groups.

Figure 4.2 Whether returning to their usual job, by gender



Only a minority of people reported that they had received help or advice from anyone to return to work, as Table 4.4 shows.

Table 4.4 Whether had help to return to work (%)

	Total %
Yes	29
No	69
Don't know	[1]
Total	100
Base	(217)

Base: Those who have started work since the baseline survey. Total does not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

4.4 Activities of Employment and Support Allowance leavers at the time of the follow-up survey

This section looks at what other income people who had left ESA were receiving at the follow-up survey. Table 4.5 presents evidence of income sources from employment or income replacement benefits for claimants who had left ESA by the time of the follow-up survey. It provides details at both waves of the survey to capture shifts over time. Information is reported separately for the FFW group and the claim closed or withdrawn groups. It is important to note that this data refers to a single point in time, i.e. the date of the follow-up survey, regardless of the point at which their claim ended. Claims could have ended at any time after the group sampled for the survey made their initial claim, which was sometime in April–June 2009. This means that, for instance, those found FFW could have a claim which ended anywhere up to 15 months previously.

4.4.1 Method

The employment data presented are self-reported from the survey, while the benefit claims data are from linked administrative data – retirement data use both sources⁴³. Where there is no information from the survey or administrative data to suggest a main income source, cases are assigned to ‘other destinations’ (the make-up of these groups is detailed subsequently in Figure 4.3).

A number of cases are excluded from this analysis. These were:

- those who had successfully appealed a WCA decision (and had been accepted onto the benefit);
- those whose appeal was pending at the time of the follow-up survey (and who were, therefore, receiving ESA at the assessment rate);
- those who had made a subsequent claim for ESA which was active at the time of the survey (who were, therefore, either receiving ESA at the assessment rate or who were in one of the benefit tiers).⁴⁴

4.4.2 FFW group

The rate of employment among the FFW group at Wave 1 of the survey was low, with 14 per cent reporting they were working. The largest income stream identified by some distance was JSA (26 per cent). Only very small numbers (four per cent) were claiming other income replacement benefits⁴⁵. This left the majority of the FFW group at Wave 1 (55 per cent) neither working, nor claiming an out-of-work benefit.

⁴³ The data on benefit claims are taken from individuals who consented to the data-linking of their administrative data. These figures were grossed up to allow for reporting on all cases.

⁴⁴ The figures presented here are therefore not directly comparable to those reported in the Wave 1 report (Barnes, H., Sissons, P. and Stevens, H. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Findings from a face-to-face survey of customers*. DWP Research Report No. 707.

⁴⁵ IS or IB or Pension Credit.

By Wave 2 of the survey, a greater number (29 per cent) of the FFW group were in work. As before, a significant proportion continued to claim JSA (22 per cent), and much smaller numbers (six per cent) were receiving other income replacement benefits⁴⁶ while 43 per cent were neither working, nor claiming an out-of-work benefit. The numbers who have received JSA at some point are likely to be much higher than this, as there may be a delay in claiming after being found FFW, and many JSA claims are also known to be of short duration⁴⁷.

4.4.3 Closed/withdrawn claims

The claim closed/withdrawn group were much more likely than the FFW group to be receiving income from employment at both waves of the survey. At Wave 1, 42 per cent of the claim closed or withdrawn group were back in work (with 20 per cent in the same job they held before becoming ill); by Wave 2 this figure was similar, at 43 per cent. A sizeable proportion (25 per cent at Wave 1 and 20 per cent at Wave 2) were claiming JSA; again this 'snapshot' figure may be lower than the proportion who have claimed at some point following the end of their ESA claim. A slightly higher proportion of the claim closed or withdrawn group had gone on to claim IS (six per cent at the baseline and four per cent at the follow-up). Much smaller proportions of the closed/withdrawn group had an unknown destination; around a quarter (26 per cent) at the baseline survey and 29 per cent at the follow-up.

4.4.4 Overall destinations for those not in WRAG or SG

Of all ended claims (i.e., these two groups combined), around a quarter (26 per cent) were in work at the time of the Wave 1 survey (26 per cent); a quarter (25 per cent) claiming JSA; five per cent claiming other income replacement benefits; and 42 per cent neither working nor claiming an out-of-work benefit. By Wave 2 the number in work had increased to more than one-third (35 per cent) and the number claiming JSA was slightly lower, at around one-fifth (21 per cent); 37 per cent did not fall into either of these groups.

Overall, these figures show that by the follow-up survey (around 16 months after respondents made their initial ESA claim) the majority of those found FFW or whose claim was closed/withdrawn were not in employment. Over a quarter were on an income replacement benefit, and more than a third (37 per cent) were neither in work nor claiming an out-of-work benefit. The activities of this latter group, and movements between claiming JSA and other activities, are the focus of a current qualitative study which will be reported in the DWP Research Report series in summer 2011⁴⁸.

Self-reported status of FFW and closed/withdrawn customers who were not working or claiming an out-of-work benefit

Figure 4.3 provides additional information from the survey about the self-reported status of those with 'other destinations' in Table 4.5. The information in this table similarly excludes individuals who have successfully appealed a WCA decision, those who were appealing at the time of the survey, and those who had reclaimed ESA. Importantly, it also excludes all those claiming an income replacement benefit already reported in Table 4.5 (for example, the unemployed figures refer only to those who are unemployed but who are not claiming JSA).

At the baseline survey, of the 55 per cent of the FFW group who had not gone into work or onto another benefit, over one-fifth (12 per cent) said they remained in employment or self-employment.

⁴⁶ These include IS, IB – which some claimants are still eligible for through linking to a previous claim – and Pension Credit.

⁴⁷ Barnes *et al.* (forthcoming) *Unsuccessful ESA claims*, DWP Research Report.

⁴⁸ This study is provisionally titled *Ended ESA Claims*.

In the vast majority of these cases they reported they were not receiving any sick pay through either employer or Statutory Sick Pay, but that their job, or self-employment occupation, remained open to them. A further nine per cent were unemployed (but not receiving an income replacement benefit), ten per cent classed themselves as temporarily sick, and 18 per cent as permanently sick.

By the follow-up survey, of the total 43 per cent of the FFW group with an 'other destination', the proportion of those who reported they had a job to go back to had reduced significantly (to five per cent); a similar proportion to Wave 1 reported being unemployed (but not on benefit) (eight per cent); and the number reporting to be permanently sick shrank somewhat, to 14 per cent.

For those in claim closed or withdrawn groups at the baseline survey (26 per cent), relatively few said they had a job to go back to (three per cent)⁴⁹. Nine per cent reported being unemployed, and five per cent reported being either temporarily or permanently sick. By the follow-up survey, there was little shift in this group, with the exception of a slight increase in unemployment and a fall in those in the 'other' category⁵⁰.

Table 4.5 Destinations by claim group, Wave 1 and Wave 2

	FFW at Wave 1 %	FFW at Wave 2 %	Claim closed or withdrawn at Wave 1 %	Claim closed or withdrawn at Wave 2 %	All leavers ¹ at Wave 1 %	All leavers at Wave 2 %
Employed						
In the same job	5	9	20	18	12	13
In a different job	9	20	22	25	14	22
Claiming an income replacement benefit						
JSA	26	22	25	20	25	21
IS	2	3	6	4	4	3
IB	1	1	0	0	1	0
Retired						
Not claiming benefit	1	1	1	3	1	2
Claiming Pension Credit	1	2	1	2	1	2
All defined destinations (employed, retired or benefit claim)	45	57	75	72	58	63
Other/unknown destination	55	43	26	29	42	37
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(1,100)	(590)	(821)	(446)	(1,921)	(1,036)

Base: FFW and closed/withdrawn groups at Wave 1 and 2 who consented to data-linking. Excluding successful appeals, pending appeals and ESA reclaims. May not sum due to rounding.

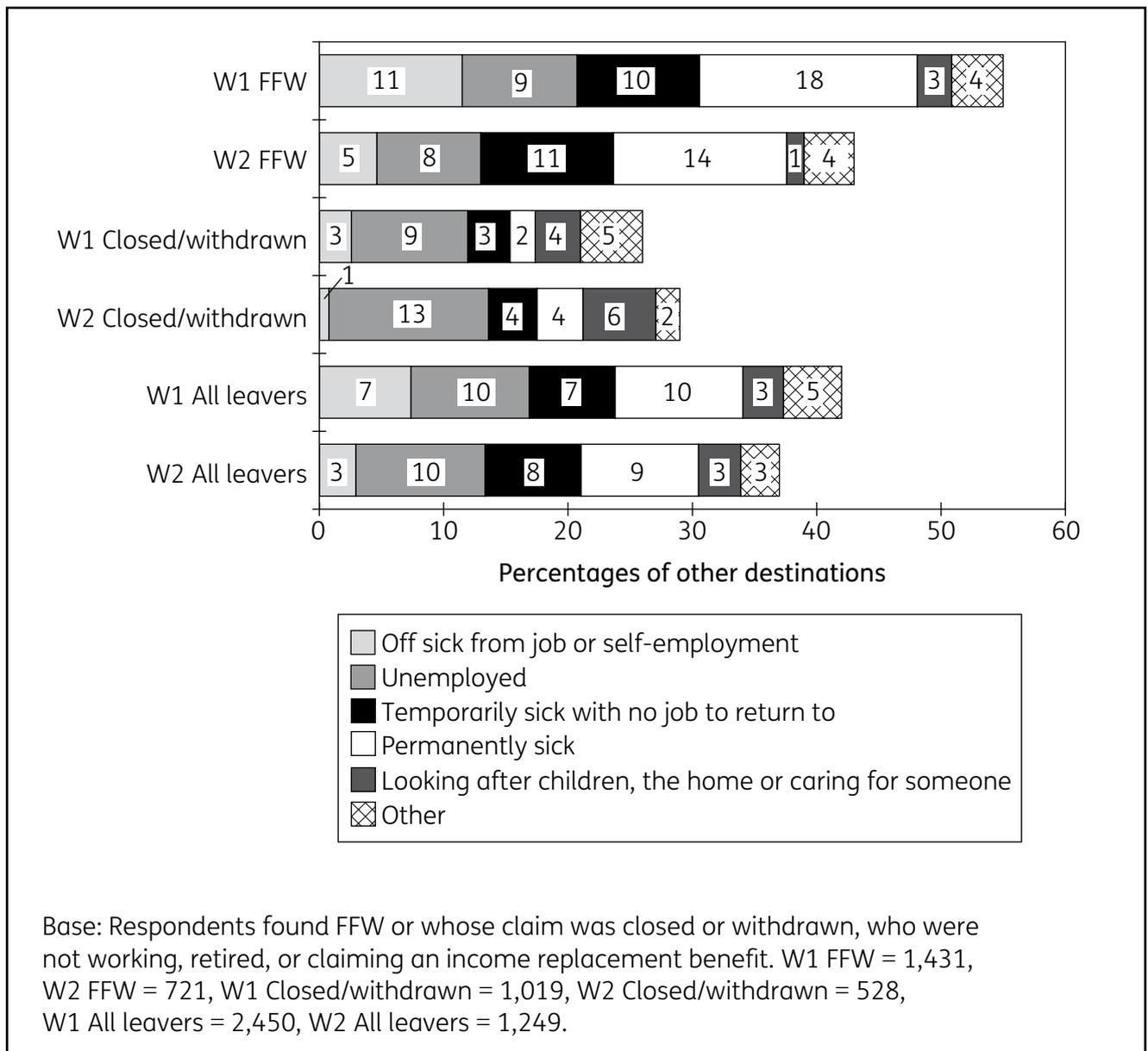
¹ FFW and closed/withdrawn combined (excluding WRAG and SG).

⁴⁹ As shown in Figure 4.2, many had already returned to their previous job.

⁵⁰ Most in this category answered 'other to' the question; 'other categories' included in training or education or on a government scheme.

Figure 4.3 shows that overall, substantial numbers of ESA leavers continue to see themselves as sick (with one in ten viewing themselves as permanently sick at both Waves 1 and 2). Bearing in mind that these figures exclude those who had appealed successfully or who were in the process of appealing, as well as ESA reclaimers, this suggests a relatively large cohort of claimants who did not expect to return to work, but remained outside the benefits system. There was also another relatively large group of leavers (ten per cent at Wave 2) who reported being unemployed, but who were also outside the benefits system.

Figure 4.3 Self-reported health and work status for ended claims, baseline (W1) and follow-up (W2) surveys



4.5 Movements onto Jobseeker's Allowance

Although survey respondents were asked directly about receipt of JSA, discrepancies in the data revealed that this was not sufficiently reliable; for instance a proportion reported that they were in receipt of JSA, when DWP administrative data showed that they were not. The analysis in this section is, therefore, based on administrative data about JSA claims at the time of the Wave 2 survey, for those people who had consented to data linking.

As Table 4.6 shows, those in the youngest age groups were most likely to be receiving JSA at the follow-up survey, as is consistent with the higher rates of unemployment reported above (Figure 4.1) for this group.

Table 4.6 Receipt of JSA, by age

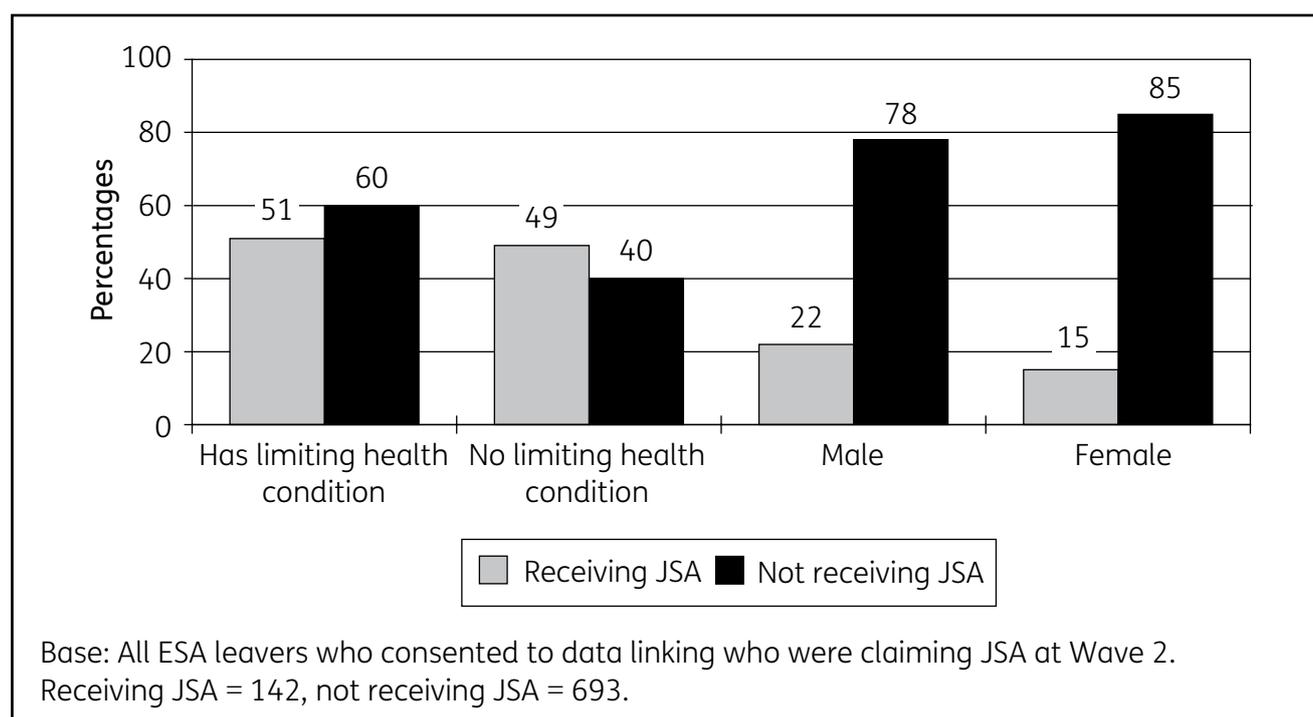
	16-24 %	25-34 %	35-49 %	50-54 %	55+ %	Total %
Receiving JSA	[28]	[27]	15	[16]	[10]	19 ¹
Not receiving JSA	72	73	85	84	90	81
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(214)	(234)	(347)	(137)	(202)	(1,135)

Base: All ESA leavers who consented to data linking who were claiming JSA at Wave 2.

¹ These figures are not directly comparable with those in the income sources analysis at section 4.4, which has a smaller base, largely because of the exclusion of those making repeat claims for benefit.

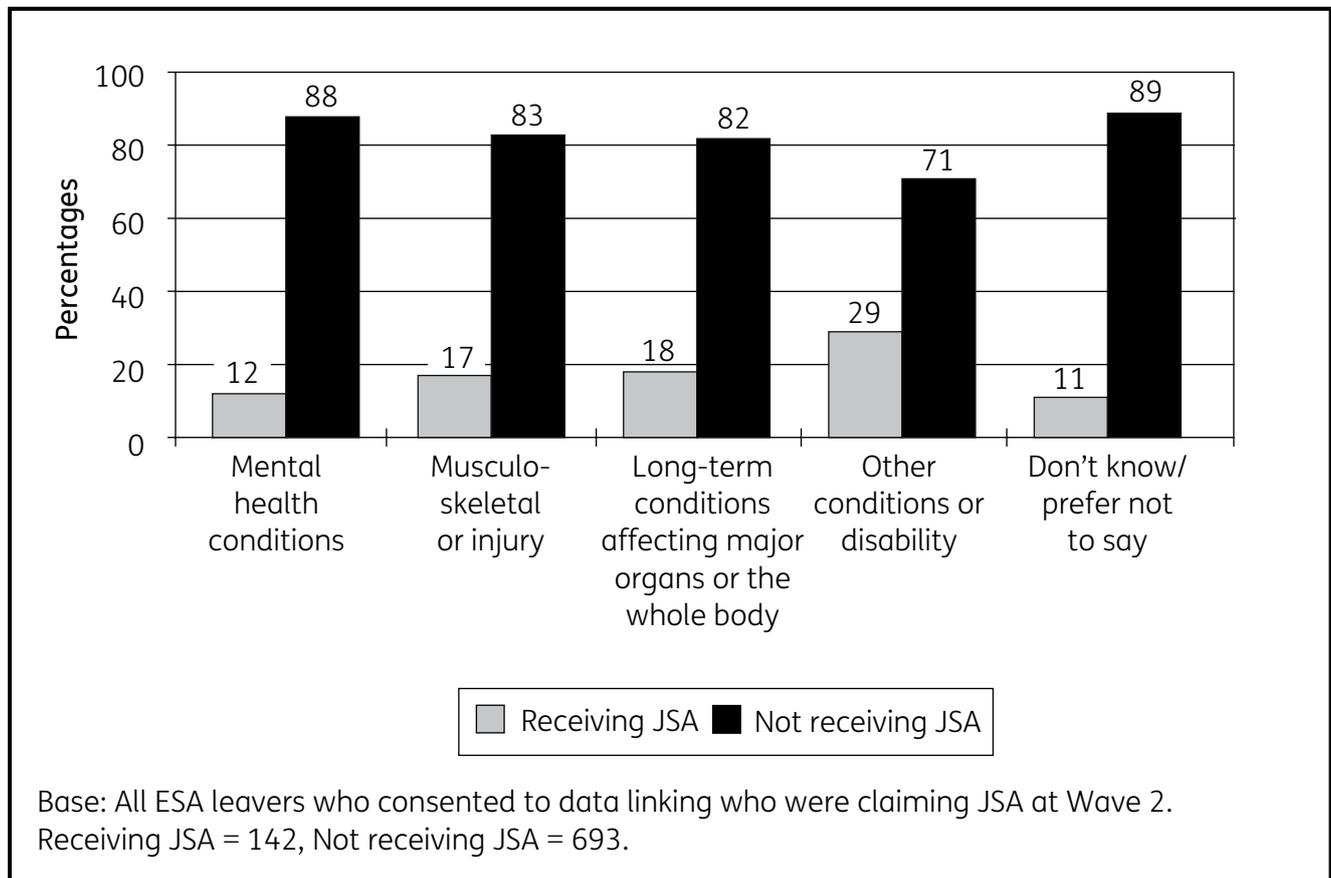
Just over half (51 per cent) of ESA leavers who were claiming JSA reported that they had a limiting long-term health condition. For ESA leavers not receiving JSA, however, the number was higher, at 60 per cent (see Figure 4.4). Although men were more likely than women to be in receipt of JSA, as Figure 4.4 demonstrates, this was not statistically significant.

Figure 4.4 Receipt of JSA, by whether has limiting health condition and gender



Looking at this by main health condition (Figure 4.5), those with ‘other’⁵¹ health conditions were most likely to be receiving JSA; no other associations were significant.

Figure 4.5 Whether in receipt of JSA, by main health condition



4.5.1 Experiences of claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance

Those claiming JSA had most often found out about this from a Jobcentre Plus adviser (47 per cent), or had claimed in the past (26 per cent), as Table 4.7 shows.

⁵¹ These figures are not directly comparable with those in the income sources analysis at Section 4.4, which has a smaller base, largely because of the exclusion of those making repeat claims for benefit.

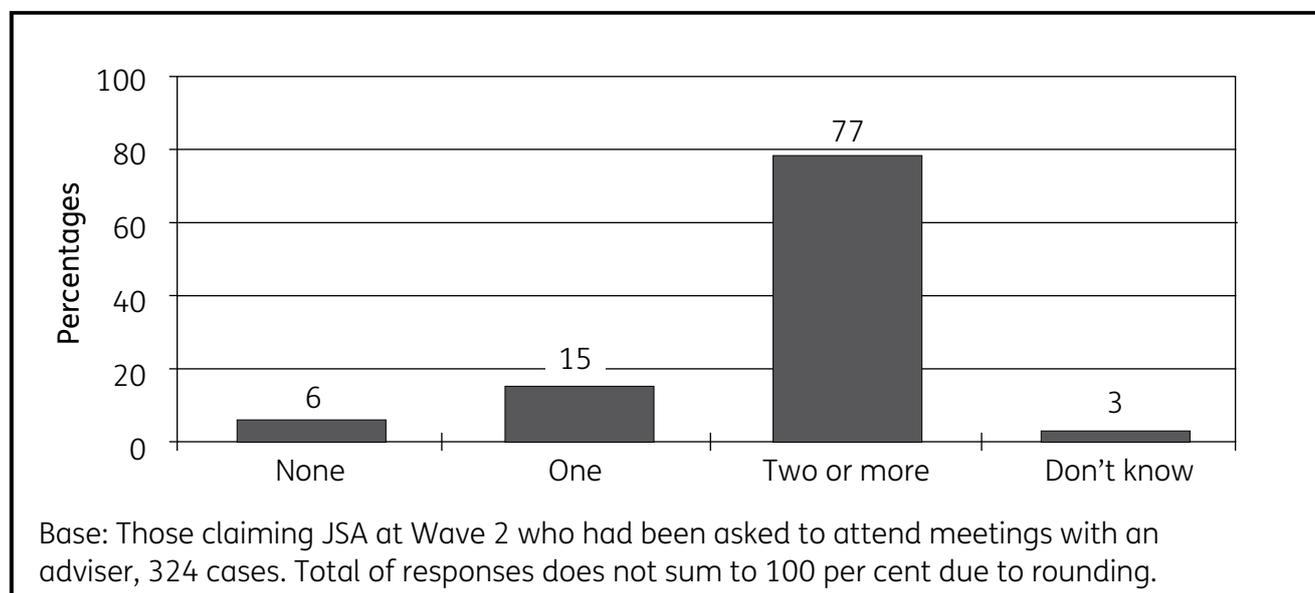
Table 4.7 How people found out about JSA

	%
Jobcentre Plus Adviser	47
Claimed in the past	26
Heard of it before	[14]
Don't know	[7]
Friend or relative	[5]
ESA disallowance letter	[3]
Other	[2]
Other adviser (e.g. CAB)	[1]
Internet	[1]
Employer/workplace	[*]
Base	(217)

Base: Those reporting claiming JSA at Wave 2. Multiple response question; does not sum to 100 per cent.

The great majority (84 per cent) of those receiving JSA said they had been asked to attend meetings with an adviser, in addition to fortnightly 'signing on', and most (77 per cent) of these had attended two or more meetings with an adviser (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 Attending meetings with an adviser



42 Destinations of those leaving Employment and Support Allowance

When respondents were asked about what they discussed in meetings with their advisers (Table 4.8), the most commonly-cited subjects were where to look for job vacancies, help with CVs and other aspects of applying for work, and referrals to other forms of training, seminars or courses. Other issues were mentioned by fewer than ten per cent of those claiming JSA. This contrasts markedly with the strong emphasis on health-related support discussed in WFIs attended as part of the ESA claim, where job-search and related activities were mentioned by only a minority of respondents, although the response categories were not identical⁵².

Table 4.8 What was discussed in meetings with advisers

	%
Where to look for job vacancies (e.g. using Job Point ¹)	82
Help with CVs, applications or interview skills	16
Training, seminars or courses	[13]
Advice on benefit entitlements	[8]
Type of work wanted	[7]
Help for a disability or health condition	[6]
Referral to careers adviser	[4]
Other	[3]
Help with writing, English or Maths	[1]
Help aimed at professionals or executives	[1]
Work trial	[1]
Base	(296)

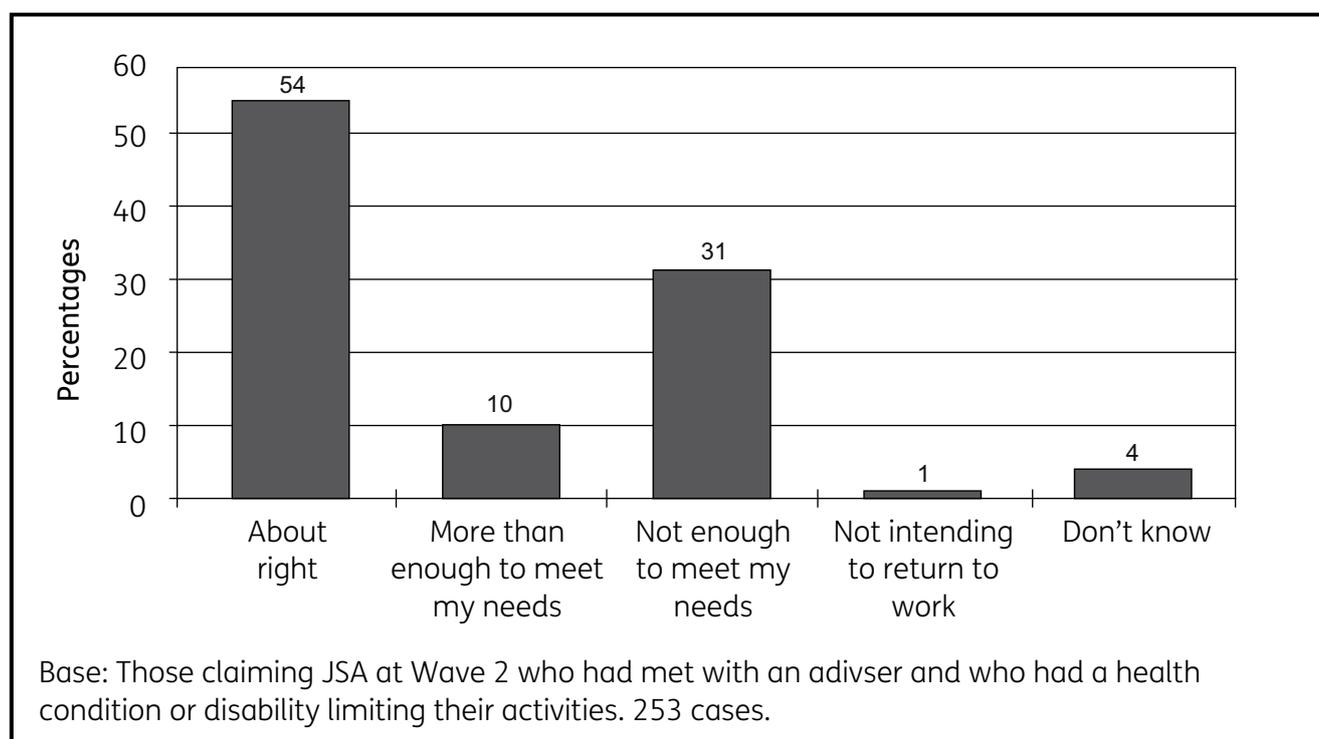
Base: Those claiming JSA at Wave 2 who had met an adviser (apart from signing-on) as part of a JSA claim. Multiple response question; does not sum to 100 per cent.

¹ This is a touchscreen with details of vacancies available, found in Jobcentre Plus offices and some other locations.

Those attending meetings with an adviser who had a current health problem were asked how adequate the support they had received had been, bearing in mind their health condition; a slight majority (54 per cent) said it had been about right, and ten per cent reported that it was more than adequate to meet their needs. Just under one-third (31 per cent) said it was inadequate (Figure 4.7).

⁵² Barnes, H., Sissons, P., Stevens, H. (2010). *Employment and Support Allowance: Findings from a face-to-face survey of customers*. DWP Research Report No. 707.

Figure 4.7 How adequate was the support received to find work, bearing in mind your health condition?



When asked about additional types of support that would have been helpful, the main issues identified were specific forms of health-related help about work, mentioned by over 40 per cent of those meeting an adviser, and advice on engaging with employers, mentioned by one-third of this group (Table 4.9). Base numbers were too small to disaggregate this analysis for subgroups.

Table 4.9 Other types of support identified as helpful

	%
More advice on the types of work that would suit your health	43
Advice on changes employers can make to accommodate your health condition or disability	41
Advice on how to engage with employers	33
Advice on managing your health condition	32
No additional support required	28
Don't know	[6]
Financial support and benefits	[5]
Advice on training	[3]
Base	(253)

Base: Those claiming JSA at Wave 2, who had met with an adviser and who had a health condition or disability limiting their activities. Multiple response question; does not sum to 100 per cent.

4.6 Conclusions

Most of those in the WRAG and SG who were receiving ESA at Wave 1 continued to do so at Wave 2, and 90 per cent of the SG and 85 per cent of the WRAG were economically inactive (not in work or looking for work) at both waves.

4.6.1 Immediate post-ESA claim activities

Most of those leaving ESA because they were found FFW or had a closed or withdrawn claim had either returned to work, or claimed another benefit, immediately after the end of their ESA claim. Overall, 43 per cent had claimed another benefit and 37 per cent had returned to work. Those with a closed/withdrawn claim were more likely to have returned to work, while those found FFW were more likely to have claimed JSA. The 20 per cent who said they had not done either gave a variety of responses when asked about their main activity, including retirement, being sick or unemployed without receiving benefit, and relying on savings or a partner's income.

4.6.2 Activities at the time of the follow-up survey

Longer-term analysis of income sources after the end of the ESA claim told a similar story, but while employment rates were similar (35 per cent at Wave 2), the proportions receiving another income replacement benefit at Wave 2 had fallen to 26 per cent, and 37 per cent were neither in employment nor claiming an income replacement benefit.

Across all claim groups, those in the youngest age group were least likely to have returned to work by the follow-up survey and most likely to be unemployed and claiming JSA. Those aged 55 or over were least likely to be claiming JSA, and most likely to be retired. Most of those who were working were returning either to the same job as before they became ill, or to a similar post. Men were more likely than women to be returning to the same job.

Jobseeker's Allowance claims

Most of those claiming JSA had been asked to attend meetings with an adviser, and most of these had attended two or more such meetings. The main issues discussed were how to look for work, and improving CVs or interview skills. Specific advice about health issues was mentioned only by a very small minority. However, there was clearly an appetite for more advice related to managing health and work among those with a health problem; over 40 per cent of this group felt that additional support of this kind would have been helpful.

5 Future expectations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the health and future work expectations of those who were still receiving ESA at the follow-up survey, and compares these with those who had left the benefit. Those still in receipt of ESA were also asked how long they expected to remain on the benefit and this is also reported here.

5.2 Expectations of remaining on Employment and Support Allowance

The majority of people (68 per cent) receiving ESA were unable to specify a date by which they expected their claim to end, but those in the WRAG were more likely than those in the SG to say that they expected to stop claiming within a year (Table 5.1). Forty-two per cent of people in the SG expected to remain on ESA indefinitely, and almost one-third (32 per cent) were unsure how long their claim would last; only 14 per cent expected to stop claiming within a year. Almost half (47 per cent) of those in the WRAG were unsure of when their claim would end, and almost one in five (19 per cent) said that they expected to claim indefinitely, but around a quarter (23 per cent) expected to stop claiming within a year.

Table 5.1 How much longer people expect to stay on ESA, by Wave 2 claim group

	SG %	WRAG %	Total %
Less than three months	2	6	5
Three months but less than six months	2	6	5
Six months but less than a year	10	11	11
One year but less than two years	5	6	5
Two or more years	7	5	5
Indefinitely	42	19	24
Don't know	32	47	44
Total	100	100	100
Base	(101)	(360)	(461)

Base: WRAG and SG respondents receiving ESA at follow up survey. Not all totals sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Expectations of remaining on ESA were also strongly linked to expectations of future health. As Table 5.2 shows, 45 per cent of those expecting an improvement in their health also expected to leave ESA within a year, compared to only 17 per cent of those who thought that their health would remain the same, and seven per cent of those who expected their health to deteriorate. A substantial proportion of people (44 per cent) were unable to estimate when they might leave benefit.

Table 5.2 How much longer people expect to stay on ESA, by future health expectations

	Better than now %	Worse than now %	About the same %	Don't know %	Total %
Less than three months	11	1	5	1	5
Three months but less than six months	12	2	4	1	5
Six months but less than a year	22	4	8	6	11
One year but less than two years	7	1	6	5	5
Two or more years	1	9	11	0	5
Indefinitely	4	56	32	18	24
Don't know	43	27	33	69	44
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(129)	(60)	(158)	(112)	(460)

Base: WRAG and SG respondents receiving ESA at follow-up survey. Not all totals sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

5.3 Expectations of return to work

5.3.1 Claim group and age

Expectations of return to work were linked to claim group. A quarter of the WRAG (24 per cent) expected to return to work within six months, compared to 16 per cent of those in the SG. Those in the WRAG were also less likely to see themselves as still being too unwell to work in six months (Table 5.3); a third (33 per cent) of those in the WRAG reported this, compared to 42 per cent of those in the SG. However, some expected to be in education or training, caring or looking for work, suggesting that they might not feel capable of a return to work in this period. People in the WRAG were much more likely than those in the SG to say that they did not know what they would be doing; almost one in five (18 per cent) of the WRAG said this, compared to under ten per cent of the SG.

Table 5.3 Expected work status in six months, WRAG/SG claimants at Wave 2

	WRAG %	SG %	Total %
In employment or self-employment	24	[16]	23
Unable to work due to sickness	33	42	35
Looking for work	10	[14]	11
In education or training	[7]	[11]	8
Looking after children or the home, or a carer for an older or disabled person	[2]	[1]	[2]
Retired	[5]	[5]	[5]
Don't know	18	[8]	15
Total	100	100	100
Base	(428)	(124)	(552)

Base: WRAG and SG claimants at Wave 2.

5.3.2 Health expectations

Future expectations of health were also linked with expectations of being in paid work (Table 5.4). Within the WRAG, those who expected their health to improve were more likely as those who expected it to stay the same to expect to return to work within six months (36 per cent, compared with 21 per cent).

Table 5.4 Expected work status in six months, by future health expectations, WRAG/SG at Wave 2

	WRAG Better than now %	WRAG Worse than now %	WRAG About the same %	WRAG Don't know %	All WRAG %	All SG %	Total %
In employment or self-employment	36	[20]	21	[17]	24	[16]	23
Unable to work due to sickness	[16]	66	35	30	33	42	35
Looking for work	[17]	[0]	[11]	[5]	10	[14]	11
In education or training	[8]	[2]	[11]	[5]	[7]	[11]	8
Looking after children or the home, or a carer for an older or disabled person	[4]	[1]	[4]	[2]	[4]	[1]	[2]
Retired	[2]	[4]	[9]	[1]	[5]	[5]	[3]
Don't know	[17]	[7]	[8]	39	18	[8]	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	130	60	144	94	428	(124)	(552)

Base: WRAG and SG at Wave 2. Not all totals sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

5.3.3 Gender and future work expectations

Amongst those still in receipt of ESA at the follow-up survey, there was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of men and women expecting to return to paid work in six months (Table 5.5). Similar proportions of men and women also expected to be looking for work or in education or training in six months' time.

Table 5.5 Expectations of work status in six months, by gender, WRAG and SG claimants at Wave 2

	Male %	Female %	Total %
In employment or self-employment	25	18	23
Unable to work due to sickness	34	35	35
Looking for work	10	11	11
In education or training	[9]	[7]	[8]
Looking after children or the home, or a carer for an older or disabled person	[1]	[6]	[1]
Retired	[5]	[5]	[5]
Don't know	15	16	15
Total	100	100	100
Base	(327)	(225)	(553)

Base: WRAG and SG claimants at Wave 2. Not all totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

5.4 Expectations of future work search

5.4.1 Overall expectations

Those who did not expect to return to work within six months were asked when they thought they might start looking for work in future. Table 5.6 looks at these expectations of future work search by claim group. A greater proportion of those in the WRAG expected to look for work in the short-term than in the SG, but only just over a quarter (27 per cent) said that they expected this to be within the next year. Those in the SG were twice as likely as those in the WRAG to say that they did not expect to work again (34 per cent, compared with 16 per cent). A relatively large proportion of both groups (38 per cent of the WRAG) said they did not know when they might start looking for work; they did not rule out being able to return to work at some stage, but felt unable to say when this might be.

Table 5.6 When people expect to be in work for those who did not expect to be looking within six months, by claim group at Wave 2

	SG %	WRAG %	FFW %	Closed/ withdrawn %	In progress/ unknown %	Total %
Within a year	[21]	27	38	43	[73]	34
One to two years	[4]	10	8	13	0	9
More than two years	[9]	4	5	[7]	[5]	5
I do not expect to work again	34	16	10	[6]	[4]	13
Never – I am retired	[5]	4	6	[8]	[4]	6
Don't know	[25]	38	33	24	[15]	32
Refused	[2]	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(102)	(323)	(354)	(196)	(17)	(993)

Base: All respondents not working and who did not expect to be looking for work within six months. Not all totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

5.4.2 Those still receiving Employment and Support Allowance

For those still receiving ESA at the follow-up survey, there was a clear association between claim group and future expectations of work search (Table 5.7). Of those not expecting to look for work in six months, 37 per cent of those in the WRAG expected to do so within two years, compared to a quarter of the SG. Those in the SG were more than twice as likely to say that they did not expect to ever work again (34 per cent, compared to 16 per cent of the WRAG).

Table 5.7 When people expect to start looking for work for those who did not expect to be looking within six months, WRAG/SG claimants at Wave 2

	WRAG %	SG %	Total %
Within a year	27	[21]	29
One to two years	10	[4]	9
More than two years	[4]	[9]	[5]
I do not expect to work again	16	34	20
Never – I am retired	[4]	[5]	[4]
Don't know	38	[25]	35
Refused	[1]	[2]	[1]
Total	100	100	100
Base	(323)	(102)	(425)

Base: WRAG and SG claimants at Wave 2. May not sum due to rounding.

As with expected employment status, people's views on when they might start looking for work were consistent with their future health expectations (Table 5.8). Over half of the WRAG (56 per cent) expecting an improvement in health also expected to start looking for work within a year, compared to only 17 per cent of those estimating that their health would get worse.

Table 5.8 When people expect to start looking for work for those who did not expect to be looking within six months, by future health expectations, WRAG/SG claimants at Wave 2

	WRAG Better than now %	WRAG Worse than now %	WRAG About the same %	WRAG Don't know %	All WRAG %	All SG %	Total %
Within a year	56	[17]	[22]	[11]	27	[21]	29
One to two years	[9]	[11]	[15]	[5]	10	[4]	9
More than two years	[0]	[4]	[8]	[1]	4	[9]	[5]
I do not expect to work again	[2]	[39]	[20]	[10]	16	34	20
Never – I am retired	[3]	[6]	[6]	[2]	4	[5]	[4]
Don't know	[30]	[24]	29	[70]	38	[25]	35
Refused	[0]	[0]	[0]	[0]	0	[2]	[1]
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(83)	(48)	(114)	(77)	(322)	(102)	(424)

Base: WRAG and SG claimants at Wave 2. May not sum due to rounding.

Those who said that they did not expect to work again were also asked an open question about whether there was any support that could help them to work in the future, but fewer than ten per cent of this group were able to identify anything in response to this question, and the base numbers were too small to be relied on.

5.5 Future work expectations – people no longer in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance

This section looks at future expectations for those whose ESA claim ended because they were found FFW, or their claim was closed or withdrawn before a decision on it was made.

Looking at expectations by gender, these trends were similar to those for people still on ESA, but more marked; 21 per cent of women in this group expected to be caring in six months' time, compared to only two per cent of men. Significantly more men than women expected to be working in six months (43 per cent, compared to 26 per cent).

Table 5.9 Expectations of work status in six months, by gender, FFW and closed withdrawn claimants at Wave 2

	Male %	Female %	Total %
In employment or self-employment	43	26	38
Unable to work due to sickness	14	18	15
Looking for work	14	14	14
In education or training	7	4	[6]
Looking after children or the home, or a carer for an older or disabled person	2	21	[9]
Retired	7	4	[6]
Don't know	11	12	12
Total	100	100	100
Base	(561)	(277)	(838)

Base: FFW and closed withdrawn claimants at Wave 2, excluding those in paid work.

Looking at health expectations (Table 5.10), improved health is associated with earlier expectations of jobsearch. Forty-seven per cent of those expecting improved health expected to start looking for work within a year. However, 30 per cent of this group did not know when they would start looking. This figure was the same for all FFW and closed/withdrawn respondents as a whole.

Table 5.10 When people expect to start looking for work for those who did not expect to be looking within six months, by future health expectations, FFW and closed/withdrawn claimants at Wave 2

	Better than now %	Worse than now %	About the same %	Don't know %	Total %
Within a year	47	[30]	45	[23]	39
1-2 years	[11]	[5]	[9]	14	10
More than 2 years	[8]	[0]	[6]	[7]	6
I do not expect to work again	[1]	[33]	[7]	[3]	8
Never - I am retired	[3]	[8]	[9]	[6]	7
Don't know	30	[23]	25	47	30
Refused	0	0	0	[1]	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Base	(128)	(73)	(246)	(104)	(550)

Base: FFW and closed withdrawn claimants at Wave 2, excluding those in paid work. May not sum due to rounding.

5.6 Conclusions

5.6.1 Future expectations of those still receiving Employment and Support Allowance

Of those still receiving ESA, around a quarter (23 per cent) of the WRAG, and one in seven (14 per cent) of the SG expected to stop claiming ESA within a year; but most found it difficult to estimate when they might stop claiming. Expectations of return to work in six months were linked to claim group and health expectations.

- Those in the WRAG were more likely than those in the SG to expect to return to work in six months.
- Those in the WRAG were less likely to see themselves as still being too unwell to work in six months; a third of those in the WRAG reported this compared to 42 per cent of those in the SG. However, some expected to be in education or training, caring or looking for work, suggesting that they might not feel capable of a return to work in this period.
- People in the WRAG were much more likely than those in the SG to say that they did not know what they would be doing, across all age groups; almost one in five (18 per cent) of the WRAG said this, compared to eight per cent of the SG.
- WRAG customers who expected their health to improve in the next six months were more likely than those who thought their health would stay about the same to say that they expected to look for work or to return to work within the next six months.

5.6.2 Future expectations of those no longer receiving Employment and Support Allowance

For those no longer receiving ESA, these trends are similar:

- Women were more likely than men to expect to be caring in six months' time, and those no longer receiving ESA were more likely to say this than those still receiving ESA.
- As for those still receiving ESA, expectations of improved health were associated with earlier expectations of jobsearch.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings of the previous chapters. It identifies patterns of continuity and change from the baseline survey, and draws out their implications.

6.2 Changes in circumstances since the baseline survey

Customers generally reported few changes in their domestic and personal circumstances between the baseline and follow-up survey – three-quarters said that nothing had changed. The most commonly-reported changes were moving home, attending training and people moving into or out of the household, but none of these were reported by more than ten per cent of respondents.

Around seven out of ten customers said they had a limiting health condition at both waves of the survey; for those still receiving ESA at the time of the follow-up survey, this was over nine in ten. A majority of customers reported that their health had changed between the baseline and follow-up survey, but this was as likely to have deteriorated as improved. For those in the older age groups, health was more likely to have deteriorated since the baseline survey. Those with mental health problems were most likely to report that their condition was changeable over time.

6.3 Employment and Support Allowance claims and appeals

Most people (over 90 per cent) claiming ESA at the follow-up survey were still on the same claim as at the baseline survey. Small proportions in the SG (ten per cent) or WRAG (15 per cent) at the baseline survey had left ESA by the follow-up survey. One important change was a proportion of people (18 per cent) defined as FFW at the baseline survey who had moved into the WRAG at the follow-up survey, following a successful appeal.

Forty six per cent of appeals succeeded, and 54 per cent had been found in favour of the DWP⁵³. Appeals were more likely to succeed where the customer had received help (71 per cent succeeded, compared to 40 per cent of those without help). The most common form of support was through the CAB or other advice centre.

The main reason given for appealing was simply viewing the WCA decision as incorrect (56 per cent). Smaller proportions (15 per cent) felt that the WCA had not been carried out properly or fairly, or that they still had a health problem.

6.4 The Work-Related Activity Group and Work-Focused Interviews

A substantial proportion of customers (half of those in the WRAG and SG) had attended at least four WFIs by the follow-up survey. They were well-received by customers, with 78 per cent of those in the WRAG finding personal advisers helpful and 80 per cent finding WFIs helpful in thinking about paid work in future, but there was no association between the number of WFIs attended and customers'

⁵³ This is broadly in line with the 60 per cent found in favour of DWP in the official statistics. http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/esa_wca_25012011.pdf

attitudes to employment, as measured by a series of statements about work. This was the case for all customers attending WFIs, including those in the WRAG.

Customers in the WRAG held a wide range of views about their future health prospects, and when they might be ready to look for paid work in the future. Many were unable to give an estimate of the latter – overall, 18 per cent said they did not know when they would be able to work again, and this rose to 39 per cent for those who were unsure of their future health prospects. This is a consideration for the timing and type of support provided for customers with a health condition through Jobcentre Plus and the Work Programme. Optimising the timing and type of interventions to support these customers may help increase their effectiveness in helping customers move towards work and looking for work.

Linked to this, one-fifth (19 per cent) of the WRAG thought they would stay on ESA indefinitely, and almost half (47 per cent) did not know how long they would stay on ESA. In addition, only a small proportion of customers placed in the WRAG (15 per cent) had left ESA by the time of the follow-up survey. For the majority of claimants, ESA is intended as a temporary benefit⁵⁴. These findings on the future expectations of the WRAG suggest that ESA will need ongoing review, if this intention is to be borne out in practice.

6.5 Ended Employment and Support Allowance claims and next steps

Most of those leaving ESA because they were found FFW or had a closed or withdrawn claim had moved into work (37 per cent) or claimed another benefit (43 per cent) immediately after the end of their ESA claim. Those who did neither of those things (i.e. the remaining 20 per cent) gave a wide range of responses when asked their main activity after their ESA claim ended, and these tended to fall into two categories. The first identified specific activities, such as moving into education, being supported by a partner, or living off savings. The second category of responses was less specific, for example ‘continuing without benefits’ or ‘don’t know’, and in these cases it was unclear what the customer’s source of income might have been.

Follow-up communication from the Department following an ended claim, especially in cases where the customer is not recorded as claiming another benefit or intending to move into work, may help ensure that all customers are provided with appropriate help and support when their ESA claim ends.

The FFW group were more likely than the closed/withdrawn group to claim another benefit (48 per cent and 38 per cent respectively) when their claim ended. The benefit they usually claimed was JSA. A high proportion (72 per cent) of the FFW group continued to report a health problem limiting their daily activities at the follow-up survey, and almost a quarter (23 per cent) saw themselves as permanently unfit to work, meaning their perception of their health and ability to work did not match the WCA assessment that they were able to work.

6.6 Employment outcomes

Ninety per cent of the SG and 85 per cent of the WRAG were economically inactive (i.e. not working or looking for work) at both waves of the survey, and less than five per cent of each group had moved into work since the baseline survey.

⁵⁴ *Raising Expectations, Increasing Support – Reforming welfare for the future, CMD 7506, p88.*

Around a quarter (26 per cent) of those leaving ESA at the baseline survey were in paid work, compared to over a third (35 per cent) at the follow-up survey. The proportion returning to the job they had before claiming ESA remained largely static (a one percentage point increase), as most people returning to their former post had already done so by the time of the baseline survey. The increase was almost all accounted for by people obtaining new jobs.

As at the baseline survey, just under half (47 per cent) of those whose claim was closed by Jobcentre Plus or withdrawn before a decision on it was made said they moved into work. This was significantly higher than the FFW group, where only 28 per cent had moved into work. This suggests that a health improvement which allows someone to move into work is an important reason why some claims end before assessment.

6.7 Views and experiences of those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance after the end of their Employment and Support Allowance claim

Most people (84 per cent) who claimed JSA after they were found FFW, or had a closed or withdrawn claim, said they had attended at least two meetings (excluding signing-on) with a personal adviser as part of their JSA claim. Half (51 per cent) of those who claimed JSA said they had a limiting health condition. Those whose ESA claim ended and went on to claim JSA tended to be younger (under 35) and have fewer qualifications than those who did not claim JSA.

In meetings with JSA advisers, where to look for job vacancies was by far the most commonly-reported topic discussed, reported by 82 per cent of JSA claimants. Only six per cent reported discussing a health condition or disability. Although the response options for the questions on ESA WFIs were different, 'more advice on the types of work that would suit your health' and 'advice on changes employers can make to accommodate your health condition or disability' were the most-reported topics in ESA meetings, mentioned by 43 per cent and 41 per cent of respondents respectively.

Although two-thirds (64 per cent) thought the support they received from JSA to find work was about right, or more than enough to meet their needs, one-third (31 per cent) thought it was not enough to meet their needs. Linked to this, when customers were asked whether additional support would be useful, significant minorities selected 'more advice on the types of work that would suit my health' (43 per cent) and advice on adaptations employers can make for health conditions (41 per cent). These findings indicate there is an appetite for more health-related support for former ESA applicants who subsequently claim JSA. This is an important consideration for the support which will be provided to this group of people through Jobcentre Plus and the Work Programme.

Appendix A

Employment and Support Allowance claim process (simplified)

Customer makes a claim for ESA

Most claims to ESA are made by phone. The adviser will give basic information about the ESA assessment process. The adviser will explain that the customer may be required to attend WFIs.

Benefit payments start

For the first 13 weeks of a claim, customers receive benefit at the assessment rate, which is the same as the JSA rate (£67.50 per week from April 2011).

First WFI

At the time of this research, customers were required to attend an interview with a Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser at around week eight of their ESA claim.

WCA and ESA50 form

The customer is sent an ESA50 form to complete and return. This is a questionnaire which asks about the impact of their health condition or disability on their day-to-day activities.

The customer or their treating physician can also provide further medical evidence they feel is relevant.

Customers with the most severe functional limitations are placed in the SG on the basis of the ESA50 form and/or other medical evidence they supply, or is requested by Atos Healthcare, who conduct the WCA.

Most customers will attend a face-to-face WCA with a HCP (this is usually a doctor, nurse, or physiotherapist). This happens at about week nine of the claim.

This process helps determine entitlement to ESA and, for those entitled, whether the customer is placed in the WRAG or SG.

Benefit decision
<p>Jobcentre Plus use the information from the WCA to help make a decision about the customer’s entitlement to ESA. This should happen at about week 13 of the ESA claim.</p> <p>Customers who are entitled to ESA are placed in the SG or WRAG.</p> <p>Customers who disagree with the decision they are FFW and not entitled to ESA, or in the WRAG rather than the SG, can appeal against this decision. If a customer appeals, ESA continues to be paid at the assessment rate, while an appeal outcome is awaited.</p> <p>Customers who are found FFW and not entitled to ESA can claim JSA. There is some flexibility in JSA to get earlier support and/or to tailor the requirements for people with disabilities or health conditions. For those entitled to ESA, a higher rate of payment starts at week 14 of the claim.</p>

SG	WRAG
<p>Customers with the most severe health conditions or disabilities are placed in the SG. They receive higher rates of benefit. There is no requirement for them to attend WFIs, but all customers can volunteer for back-to-work support.</p>	<p>Those who can prepare for a return to work are required to attend three further WFIs, where steps the customer can take to prepare to move towards work (such as training) are discussed. Further WFIs may take place with Jobcentre Plus or with a Pathways to Work Provider, who conduct WFIs on behalf of Jobcentre Plus in some areas.</p>

Appendix B

Health conditions

Mental health conditions

- A. Stress or anxiety
- B. Depression
- C. Fatigue or problems with concentration or memory
- D. Other mental health conditions

Conditions related to bones, muscle problems, or physical injury

- E. Problems with your arms or hands
- F. Problems with your legs or feet
- G. Problems with your neck, shoulders or back
- H. Pain or discomfort
- I. Any other condition related to bone or muscle problems or physical injury

Long-term conditions that affect major organs or the whole body

- J. Problems with your bowel, stomach, liver, kidneys or digestion including Crohn's disease
- K. Chest or breathing problems including asthma
- L. Heart problems or blood pressure including angina
- M. Skin conditions or allergies
- N. Cancer
- O. Other long-term condition (please specify)

Other condition or disability

- P. Difficulty in seeing
- Q. Difficulty in hearing
- R. Dizziness or balance problems
- S. Diabetes
- T. Problems due to alcohol
- U. Problems due to illegal use of drugs
- V. Epilepsy
- W. Learning difficulties including dyslexia
- X. Aspergers syndrome or autism
- Y. Progressive illness not covered above
- Z. Other health problem or disability (please specify)

This report presents findings from a follow-up telephone survey of 1,842 people who made a claim for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) between April and June 2009. They were initially surveyed face-to-face between December 2009 and February 2010, around six to ten months after they had made their initial claim for ESA. Participants who agreed to be contacted again were interviewed for this follow-up survey, which was conducted between July and September 2010.

This follow-up survey explores the progress over time of this group of ESA claimants. In particular, it looked at any changes in health and personal circumstances, continuing ESA claim experiences and future plans of those still in receipt of the benefit at the follow-up survey, and the activities of those no longer claiming ESA.

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