
Mary Gregory, Deputy Director for Regulation

Steve Ellerd-Elliott
Chief Statistician
Department for Work and Pensions
(by email)

8 April 2022

Dear Steve,

Universal Credit Work Capability Assessment Statistics

Thank you for your engagement with our queries about Universal Credit Work Capability Assessment (WCA) statistics. We discussed the lack of statistics on WCA following the move to Universal Credit and phase out of the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

The Department for Work and Pensions has produced [statistics](#) on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA): outcomes of Work Capability Assessments (WCA) since 2010. These statistics have been used widely and are of significant public interest.

Since the transition to Universal Credit in 2018, most new claimants are not included in the ESA WCA statistics as ESA and Universal Credit claimants are in separate systems. The lack of Universal Credit WCA statistics leaves a gap in the information available on workplace capability assessments.

As part of your [user consultation](#) on the Universal Credit statistics strategy in 2017 the Department under the heading “areas for future exploration” stated that “It is not possible to provide a precise timescale or definitive list of additional breakdowns at this stage however we hope to investigate the following new data areas” including the “Outcomes of Work Capability Assessments: Universal Credit claimants – number of referrals for Work Capability Assessments and outcome including reason for assignment to limited capability for work or limited capability for work and work-related activity”. However, no further information on these areas for future exploration has been published.

Users have a continued and unfulfilled need for WCA statistics since the rollout of Universal Credit as most new claimants are excluded from the ESA WCA statistics. It is not clear from what is publicly available, what, if any, plans are in place to address this and when they are anticipated to be completed. We expect statistics producers to be clear and transparent in their decision making, and to include reasons why gaps in reporting remain.

We understand that you need to prioritise outputs. However, in doing so you should consider user needs for the data and be clear publicly about decisions you have made and future plans, especially for important outputs where there is an expectation they are published, such as the Universal Credit WCA statistics.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Gregory
Deputy Director for Regulation