

# Department of Social Protection Report on Disability Allowance Survey 2015

Ciaran Judge

Éamonn Rossi

Saidhbhín Hardiman

Ciarán Oman



# Department of Social Protection Report on Disability Allowance Survey 2015

Ciaran Judge

Eamonn Rossi

Saidhbhín Hardiman

Ciarán Oman

Published by  
Department of Social Protection  
Áras Mhic Dhiarmada  
Store Street  
Dublin, Ireland  
D01WY03

[ISBN]:XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
Department of Social Protection, 2016

Dublin, Ireland September 2016



## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	The Disability Allowance scheme	1
1.2	The 2015 Disability Allowance Survey	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Disability Allowance: scheme overview</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Recipient numbers and expenditure	4
2.2	Gender and age profile	5
2.3	Nationality of recipients	6
2.4	Geographical distribution	7
2.5	Duration of Disability Allowance claims	8
<b>3</b>	<b>Survey Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1	Questionnaire and survey pack design	9
3.2	Sample generation	9
3.3	Conducting the survey	10
3.4	Survey results	10
<b>4</b>	<b>Selected Survey Results</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1	Educational experience and ambitions	13
4.2	Employment experience and ambitions	15
4.3	Employment supports	19
4.4	Barriers to employment	20
4.5	Health	22
	<b>Appendix 1 Survey Questionnaire</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Appendix 2 Survey questions and detailed responses</b>	<b>28</b>
	<b>Appendix 3 Survey cover letter and supporting documentation</b>	<b>41</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Disability Allowance recipient numbers and expenditure, 2006 to 2015 (Source: DSP) .....	4
Figure 2: Disability Allowance recipients by sex and age group, January 2016 (Source: DSP) .....	5
Figure 3: Disability allowance recipients by nationality <sup>4 5</sup> , January 2016 (source: DSP).....	6
Figure 4: Map of Disability Allowance Recipients by location, January 2016 (source: DSP)..	7
Figure 5: Disability Allowance recipients by county, January 2016 (Source: DSP) .....	7
Figure 6: Disability Allowance claims by duration, January 2016 <sup>6</sup> (source: DSP) .....	8
Figure 7: Disability Allowance survey response rate by age and sex (Source: DSP).....	11
Figure 8: Disability Allowance survey response rate by claim duration (Source: DSP) .....	11
Figure 9: Interest in full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) work by Disability Allowance claim duration (Source: DSP) .....	12
Figure 10: Disability allowance recipients by highest level of education (Source: DSP).....	13
Figure 11: Disability Allowance recipients by most recent education (Source: DSP) .....	14
Figure 12: Disability Allowance recipients by interest in education (Source: DSP) .....	14
Figure 13: Disability Allowance recipients by employment experience (Source: DSP).....	15
Figure 14: Disability Allowance recipients by most recent employment type (Source: DSP) 16	
Figure 15: How work is going for Disability Allowance recipients reporting current full-time employment (Source: DSP).....	16
Figure 16: How work is going for Disability Allowance recipients reporting current part-time employment (Source: DSP).....	17
Figure 17: Disability Allowance recipients in part-time employment: desired hours worked in relation to current hours worked (source: DSP).....	17
Figure 18: Disability Allowance recipients in full-time employment: desired hours worked in relation to current hours worked (source: DSP).....	18
Figure 19: Interest in employment among Disability Allowance recipients who are not currently working (Source: DSP) .....	18
Figure 20: Supports mentioned by Disability Allowance recipients as important to helping achieve their employment ambitions and goals. A Respondent may mention multiple supports. (Source: DSP) .....	19
Figure 21: Reasons mentioned by Disability Allowance recipients as preventing them from achieving their employment ambitions and goals. A respondent may mention multiple reasons. (Source: DSP) .....	21
Figure 22: Incapacity, illnesses or disabilities indicated (Source: DSP) .....	22
Figure 23: Disability Allowance recipients by level of difficulty with everyday activities (Source: DSP).....	23
Figure 24: How often Disability Allowance customers report their illness or disability affects them (source: DSP) .....	23

## List of Tables

Table 1: Disability Allowance: number of recipients and age ranges, January 2016 ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ) .....	5
Table 2: Highest level of education attended ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ) .....	28
Table 3: Time passed since last in education or training ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ) .....	29
Table 4: Level of interest in education or training courses ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ) .....	29
Table 5: Past employment experience ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ).....	30
Table 6: Employment ambitions and goals given the right supports ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ) .....	31
Table 7: Supports identified to help achieve employment ambitions & goals ( <i>Source: DSP</i> )	33
Table 8: Barriers identified preventing achievement of employment ambitions & goals ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ).....	35
Table 9: Most recent employment by type ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ) .....	36
Table 10: Experience of those currently in part-time employment ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ).....	37
Table 11: Experience of those currently in full-time employment ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ) .....	37
Table 12: Main disability or illness ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ) .....	39
Table 13: Level of difficulty with everyday activities ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ).....	39
Table 14: Frequency of impact of disability or illness ( <i>Source: DSP</i> ).....	40

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Disability Allowance scheme

Disability Allowance (DA) is a weekly means tested allowance paid by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) to people with a disability. To qualify for Disability Allowance an applicant must:

- ❖ Have an **injury, disease or physical or mental disability** that has continued or may be expected to continue for **at least one year**
- ❖ As a result of this disability, be **substantially restricted in undertaking work** that would otherwise be suitable for a person of similar age, experience and qualifications
- ❖ Be **aged between 16 and 66<sup>1</sup>**
- ❖ Satisfy a **means test**
- ❖ Satisfy the **habitual residence condition**.

The objectives of the Disability Allowance scheme are twofold:

- ❖ To **provide income supports to people with disabilities** whose employment capacity is substantially reduced by reason of their disability and whose means are insufficient to meet their own needs and those of their dependents
- ❖ To **encourage and assist** people with disabilities and long-term illnesses to identify and take up **employment, training, educational and other self-development opportunities**, where appropriate.

The scheme rules provide for an *earnings disregard*,<sup>2</sup> which allows the recipient to work up to a certain income limit and continue to avail of the allowance. Currently some 10% of scheme recipients are availing of this disregard in order to work.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eligibility is from 16<sup>th</sup> birthday to 66<sup>th</sup> birthday.

For children aged less than 16, Domiciliary Care Allowance may be payable (see [http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/1078\\_Domiciliary-Care-Allowance.aspx](http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/1078_Domiciliary-Care-Allowance.aspx) for details). At age 66, Disability Allowance recipients become eligible for the State Pension (contributory <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/State-Pension-Contributory.aspx> or non-contributory [http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/248\\_State-Pension-Non-Contributory.aspx](http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/248_State-Pension-Non-Contributory.aspx)).

<sup>2</sup> Disability Allowance recipients can earn up to €120 per week without payment being affected. 50% of earnings between €120 and €350 will not be taken into account in the means test. Any earnings over €350 are fully assessed.

The scheme was introduced on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1996, replacing the Disabled Person's Maintenance Allowance (DPMA) which was administered by the Health Boards. On that date, all existing DPMA claims were transferred to Disability Allowance.

Further information on Disability Allowance is available at:

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Disability-Allowance.aspx>.

## 1.2 The 2015 Disability Allowance Survey

The overall objective of the 2015 Disability Allowance Survey is to **inform the design of supports and interventions** which will **assist people** in receipt of the allowance to **participate in the labour force according to their capacity**.

The survey explores Disability Allowance recipients' experience and ambitions in four key areas:

- ❖ Education level and ambitions
- ❖ Work experience and ambitions
- ❖ Supports which would be helpful to achieve employment ambitions
- ❖ Barriers to achieving employment ambitions.

In addition, the survey explores recipients' self-declared health status.

This research was conducted in the context of the Government's recently launched Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. An interdepartmental group, under independent chairmanship, has been charged with addressing Strand 3 of the Strategy, "Make Work Pay" and to produce a report to Government by end of 2016. This research will form an important input into the work of the interdepartmental group and to the formulation of strategy generally in this area. The survey questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was designed by the Disability Policy section of the Department of Social Protection in collaboration with the Statistics Unit, following consultation with a number of disability advocacy groups.

In October 2015, the Statistics Unit posted survey packs to 12,007 people in receipt of Disability Allowance. As well as the confidential survey questionnaire, the packs included a cover letter, a list of answers to expected frequently asked questions, and a statement of support from bodies including Citizens Information and a number of disability advocacy and support groups (Appendix 3). The supporting materials made clear that individuals' survey responses can only ever be used for statistical processing and research.

Responses were received from 27% of those surveyed. This was an excellent response rate given the postal modality of the survey and the population being surveyed.

An analysis of the principal survey results is presented in section 4, and full details of the responses received are given in Appendix 1.

The Department of Social Protection would like to express its sincere thanks to all the individuals and groups who helped to make the survey a success, from questionnaire design to support for the survey and assistance to respondents in completing the questionnaires.

*The Department's Statistics Unit can facilitate access by appropriately accredited researchers to anonymous microdata from the survey, matched to administrative records. To apply for this microdata access, please email [statsunit@welfare.ie](mailto:statsunit@welfare.ie) with 'Disability Allowance survey microdata access' in the subject line.*

The next section of the report will provide a general overview of the Department's Disability Allowance scheme based upon information available from the administrative data.

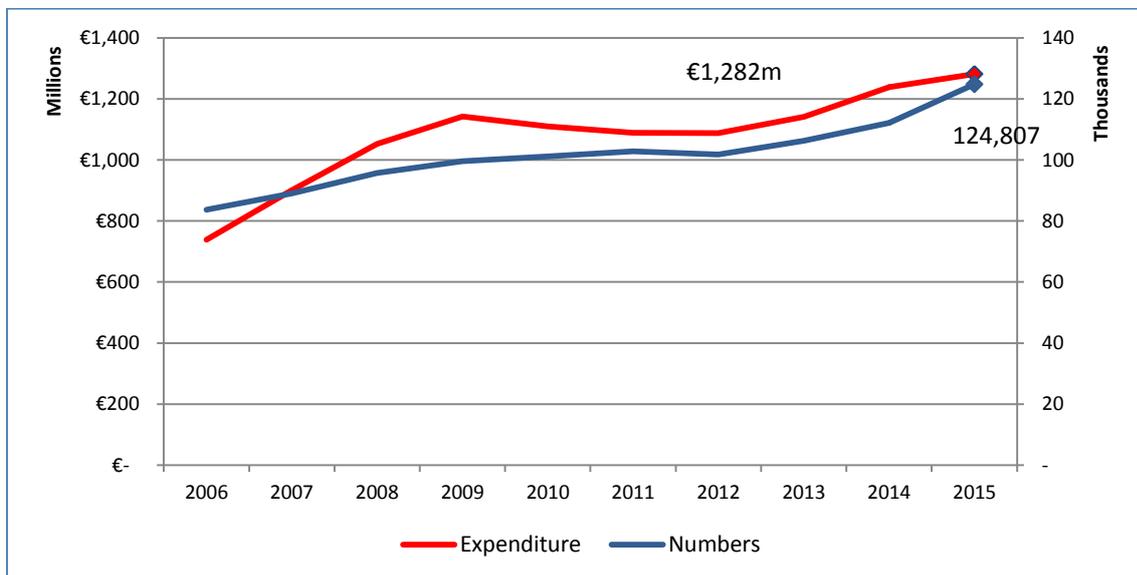
## 2 Disability Allowance: scheme overview

### 2.1 Recipient numbers and expenditure

Over the last ten years, the number of recipients of Disability Allowance has increased steadily by almost 50%, from 83,697 in 2006 to 124,807 as of January 2016. This growth reflects, in part, demographic change (the growth and "ageing" of the working-age population) and has been offset by a fall in numbers on certain other illness-related payments (such as long-term illness benefit).

Over the same period, as shown in Figure 1, expenditure grew by 73.6% from €738 million in 2006 to €1,238 million in 2015. Total expenditure is projected to be €1,288 million in 2016. The average payment per recipient has thus risen by about 16% over the period.

**Figure 1: Disability Allowance recipient numbers and expenditure, 2006 to 2015 (Source: DSP)**



## 2.2 Gender and age profile

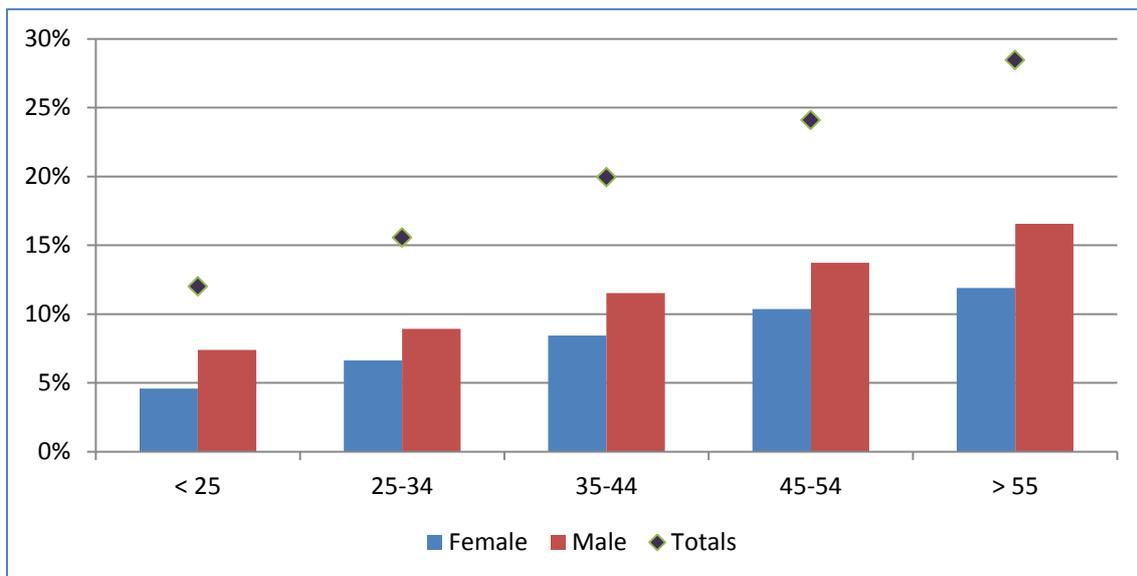
The scheme’s rules mean that Disability Allowance recipients’ ages range from 16 to 66<sup>3</sup>. The majority of recipients are aged 45 or over, with a median age of 46.

**Table 1: Disability Allowance: number of recipients and age ranges, January 2016 (Source: DSP)**

Recipients	Youngest	Mean age	Median age	Oldest
124,807	16	44	46	66

Some 42% of Disability Allowance recipients are female and 58% male. This gender split applies across all age groups as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Disability Allowance recipients by sex and age group, January 2016 (Source: DSP)**

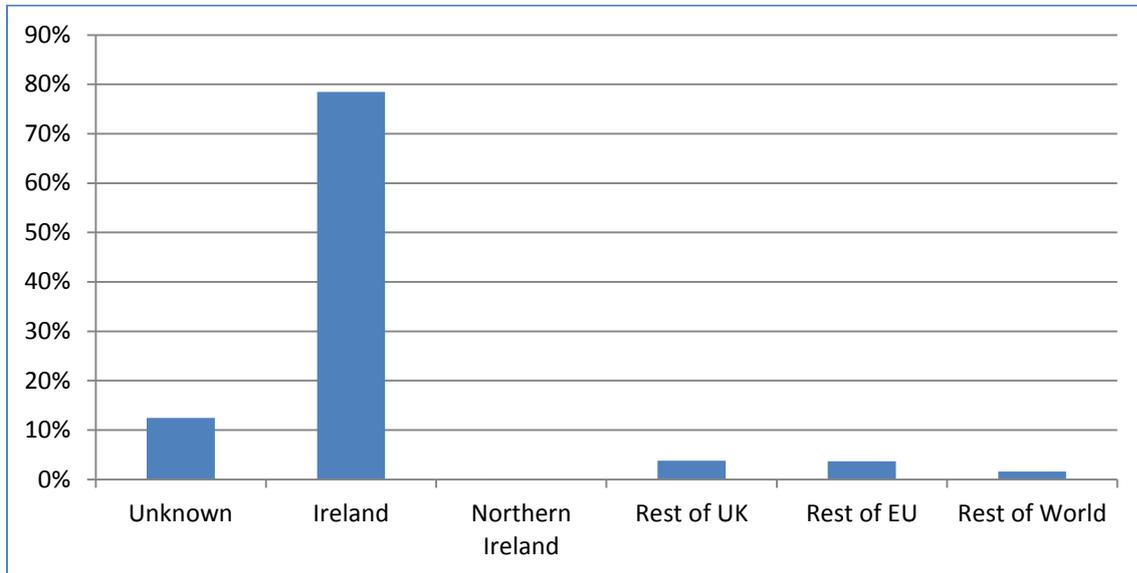


<sup>3</sup> Payment of Disability Allowance cannot be made before the age of 16 or after the age of 66. Timing issues may mean that some people may receive a payment after their 66<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### 2.3 Nationality of recipients

Approximately 90% of Disability Allowance recipients are Irish<sup>4</sup>, with 4% from the UK, 4% from the rest of the EU, and less than 2% from all other countries<sup>5</sup>.

**Figure 3: Disability allowance recipients by nationality<sup>4 5</sup>, January 2016**  
(source: DSP)

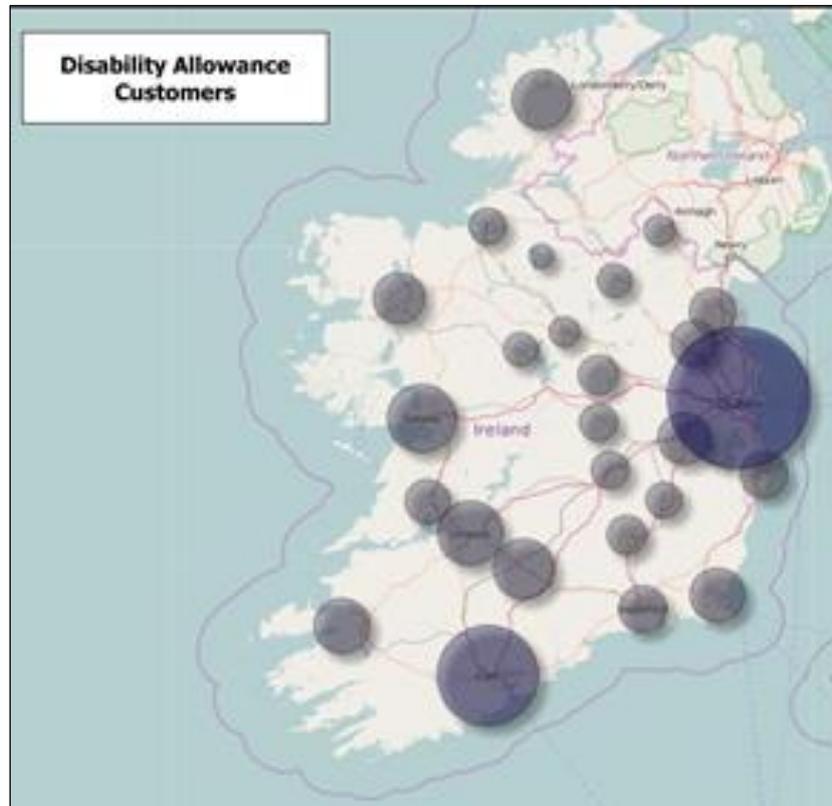


<sup>4</sup> Nationality information is missing for about 12% of recipients, all of whom have claims of long duration. In general, these are claims which were transferred to the Department of Social Protection in 1996 from the Disabled Person's Maintenance Allowance scheme administered by the Health Boards. However, our analysis indicates that the vast majority of these people are Irish.

<sup>5</sup> 'Nationality' rather than 'Country of Birth' is captured in the Disability Allowance database, and this field is not automatically updated if a claimant's nationality changes. Thus, these figures reflect *stated nationality at the time of completing the original claim form or nationality as later voluntarily updated by the claimant* and so are not guaranteed to reflect current nationality or country of birth (if different).

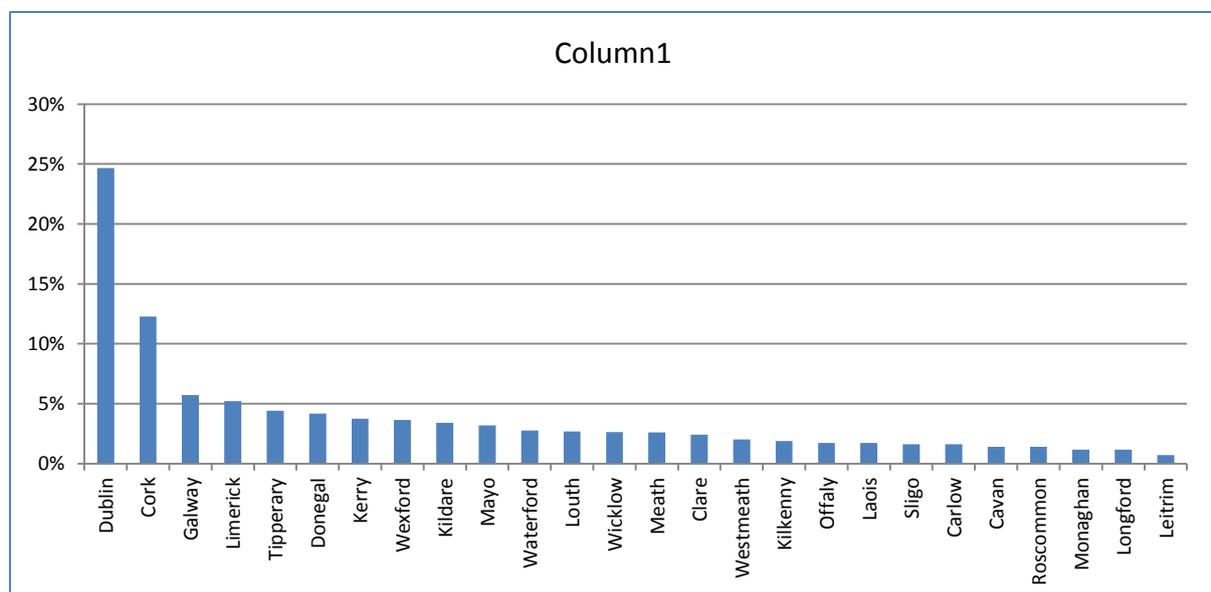
## 2.4 Geographical distribution

**Figure 4: Map of Disability Allowance Recipients by location, January 2016**  
(source: DSP)



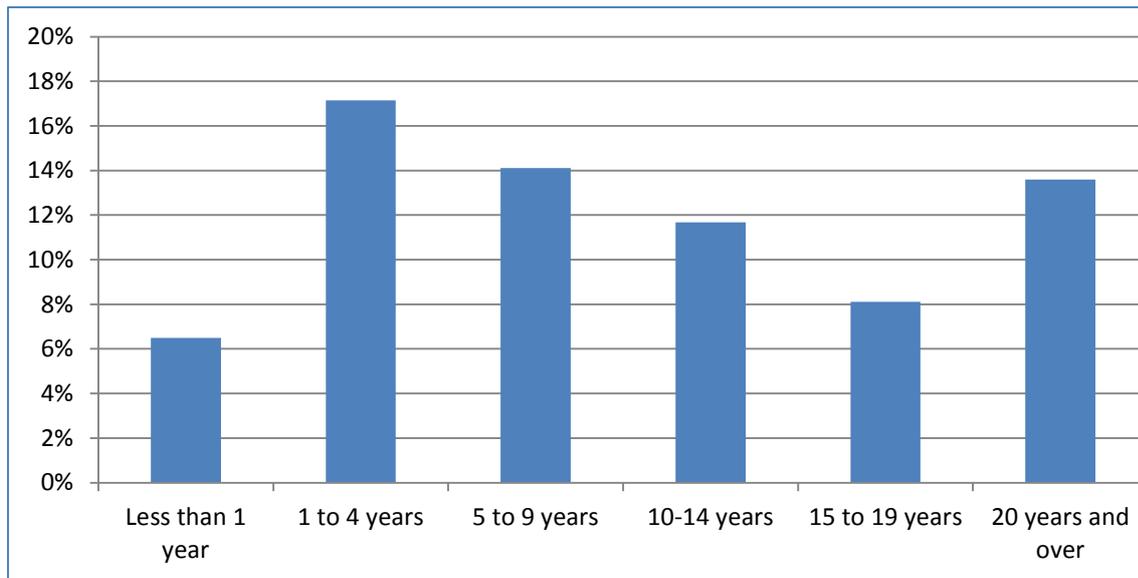
Within the State, 25% of recipients live in Dublin and about 12% in Cork (city and county). On average, about 3.9% of recipients live in each of the other 24 counties, with numbers ranging from 5.8% in Galway to 0.7% in Leitrim.

**Figure 5: Disability Allowance recipients by county, January 2016** (Source: DSP)



## 2.5 Duration of Disability Allowance claims

Figure 6: Disability Allowance claims by duration, January 2016<sup>6</sup> (source: DSP)



Disability Allowance is a long-term social protection scheme, with a median claim duration of 7 ½ years<sup>6</sup>.

However, the rapidly growing nature of the scheme is clear from Figure 6: 23% of recipients have a claim duration of less than five years, and over 6% of all Disability Allowance claimants have joined the scheme in the last year alone.

The next section of this report will provide an overview of the survey methodology including questionnaire and survey pack design, the generation of the survey sample and the conducting of the survey.

<sup>6</sup> In 1996, all active claims under the Disabled Persons Maintenance Allowance (DPMA) scheme – some 15,000 people – were automatically transferred to Disability Allowance. In the Disability Allowance database, no information is available about the prior (DPMA) duration of these claims, so that all of these claims appear to have the same start date and duration, approximately 20 years ago. This means that *median* duration (7 ½ years) is a more reliable metric for the scheme than *mean* duration (8.4 years): the latter takes no account of the prior DPMA duration of the longest-running claims and is therefore an understatement.

## 3 Survey Methodology

### 3.1 Questionnaire and survey pack design

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix 1 for full details) was designed by the Disability Policy section of the Department of Social Protection in collaboration with the Statistics Unit, following consultation with a number of disability advocacy groups.

These groups also gave valuable input into the design of the rest of the survey pack which accompanied the questionnaire. The packs included a cover letter, a list of answers to expected frequently asked questions, and a statement of support from bodies including Citizens Information and a number of disability advocacy and support groups (see Appendix 3 for details).

The supporting materials made clear that –

- ❖ Participation in the survey is entirely voluntary.
- ❖ Individual responses to the survey constitute confidential statistical data under the terms of the Data Protection Acts and/or the Statistics Act.
- ❖ As such, responses cannot legally be used for any administrative, operational, or control purposes by the Department of Social Protection or any other body, and can therefore never affect respondents' current or future Social Welfare claims.

The questionnaire and supporting documents were also reviewed by Plain English Ireland to ensure accessibility and readability.

A contact telephone number and email address were provided, and respondents were also given the option of completing the form in Irish.

### 3.2 Sample generation

The Statistics Unit drew up a stratified random sample<sup>7</sup> of 12,007 people in receipt of Disability Allowance at end-August 2015 – this represented approximately 10% of the Disability Allowance recipient population, after data cleaning.

---

<sup>7</sup> The sample was stratified by age group, sex, family status and county of residence.

To ensure complete confidentiality while enabling the construction of a statistical bridge to the administrative data for each respondent, a Survey ID was assigned to each selected record. A dictionary allowing reconciliation of these survey IDs to administrative records was produced and securely held by the Statistics Unit. This avoided the need to ask background questions on the survey (such as age, sex, address) as this information is accessible through the administrative data link.

### 3.3 Conducting the survey

In October 2015, the Statistics Unit posted survey packs to the 12,007 people in the random Disability Allowance sample.

The dedicated phone support line and email address advertised in the survey pack were staffed by rostered DSP officials on temporary assignment to the Statistics Unit. About 400 queries were received, representing a 3.3% query rate: these queries related mainly to worries that claims might be affected somehow, and to difficulties in completing the survey questionnaire.

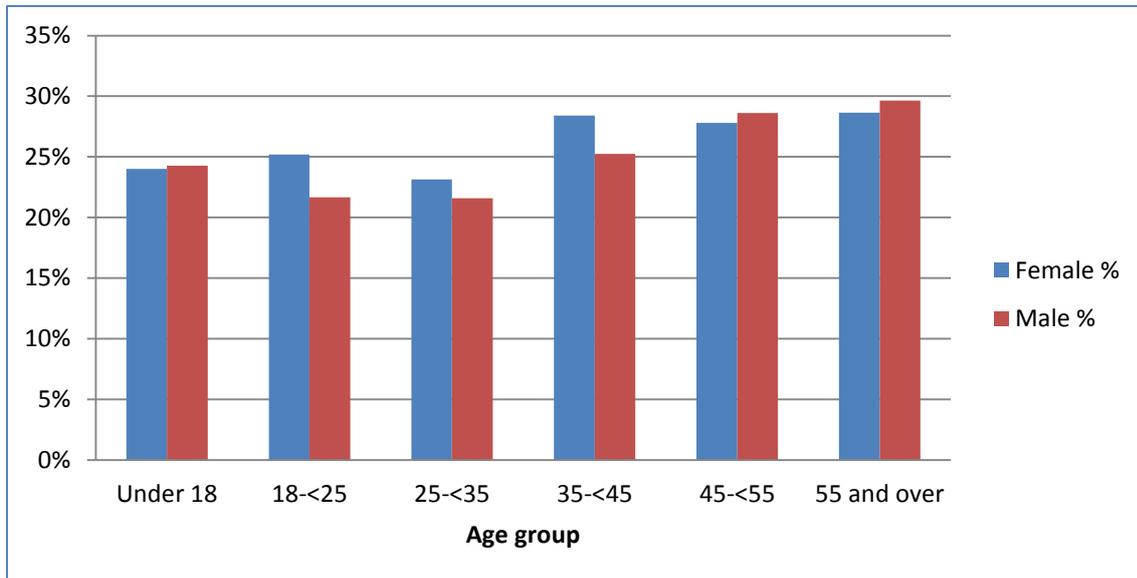
### 3.4 Survey results

3,198 responses were received, representing a response rate of 27%. This was an excellent outcome given the postal modality of the survey and the sensitive nature of the population being surveyed.

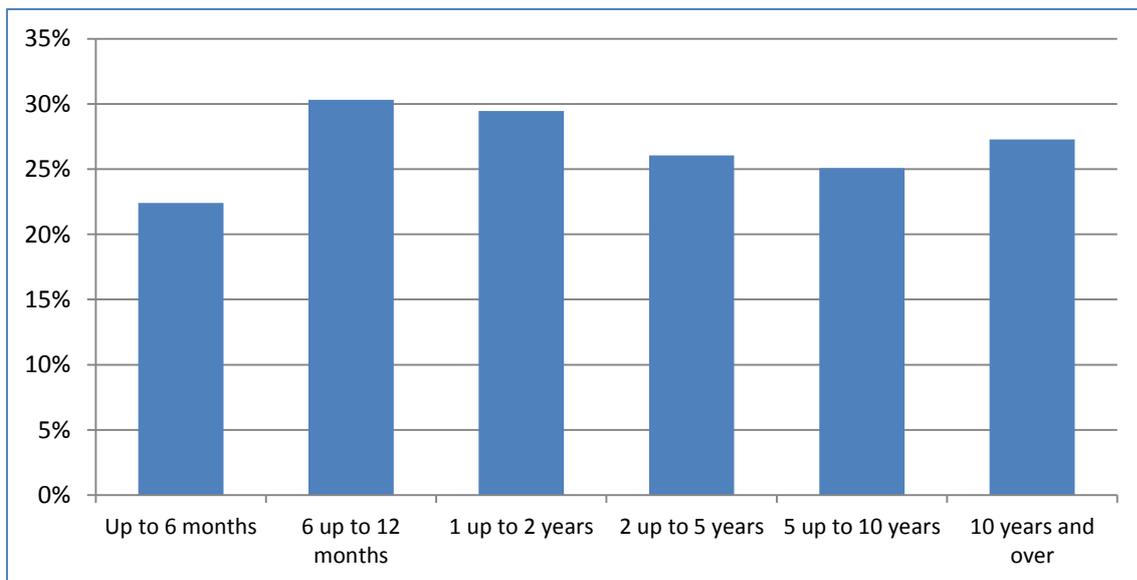
The survey responses were keyed into a database, cleaned, and analysed using SAS statistical software. Using the Survey ID associated with each response, the Statistics Unit was able to link the responses received back to the respondents' administrative records.

This administrative record link enabled us to analyse how representative the survey results were of the wider Disability Allowance population. As shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8, there was significant variation in response rates by key characteristics such as age group, sex and claim duration band. Nonetheless, because sufficient responses were received for each subgroup, and because response rates did not vary between subgroups to an unreasonable degree, we were then able to correct for this observed response bias by applying an appropriate weighting adjustment to the survey results.

**Figure 7: Disability Allowance survey response rate by age and sex (Source: DSP)**



**Figure 8: Disability Allowance survey response rate by claim duration (Source: DSP)**



Unless otherwise stated, all the survey results presented in this report incorporate this weighting adjustment<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, full details of all the survey results – raw response numbers, weighting adjustments, standard error of weighting

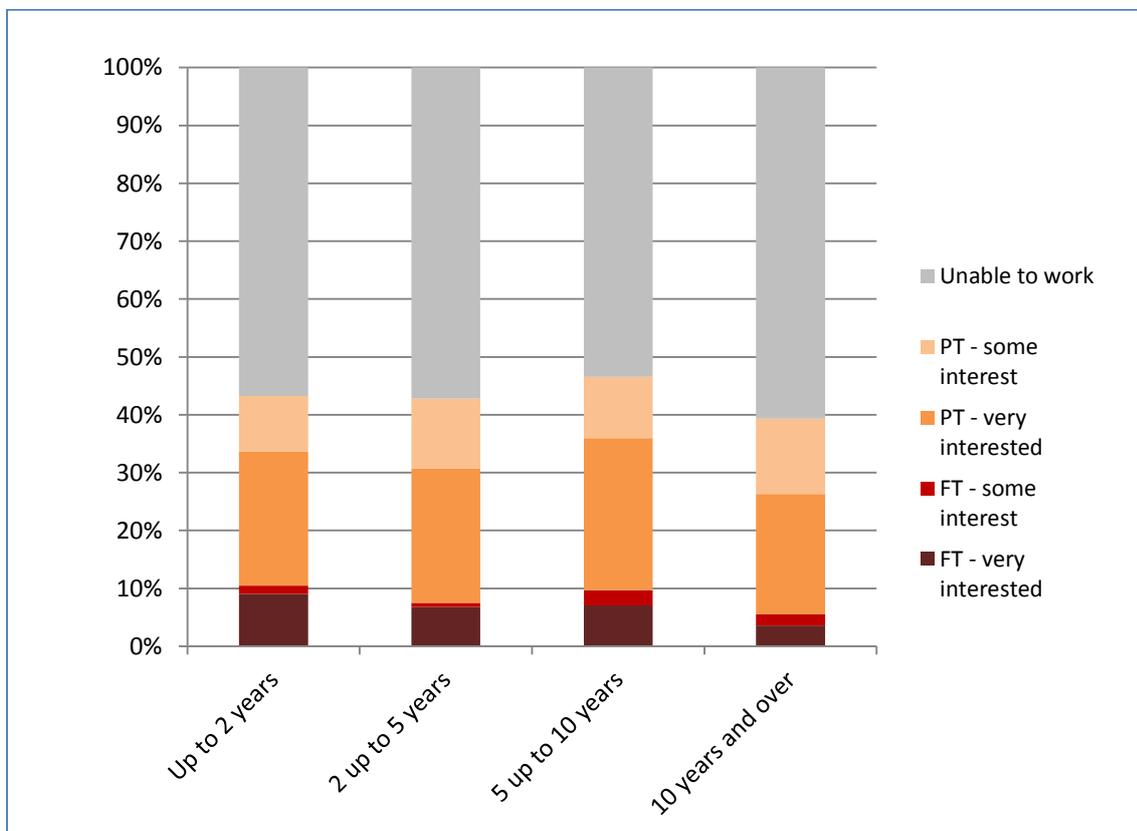
<sup>8</sup> The auxiliary variables used for the adjustment were sex, age band, claim duration band, and Dublin/other (as a proxy for an urban/rural split). The weighting adjustment was implemented using the SAS PROC SURVEYFREQ and PROC SURVEYMEANS procedures.

adjustments, and percentage breakdowns – are given alongside the survey questions in Appendix 1.

As well as enabling reweighting to correct for response bias, the statistical link to administrative data also allows rich analysis of the survey results. This applies both to personal characteristics observable in the administrative data at the time of the survey and, over time, to labour market, education and health outcomes of the survey participants.

A simple example of this kind of joined-up analysis is shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Interest in full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) work by Disability Allowance claim duration (Source: DSP)**



The next section of the report will take a detailed look at a selection of the survey results.

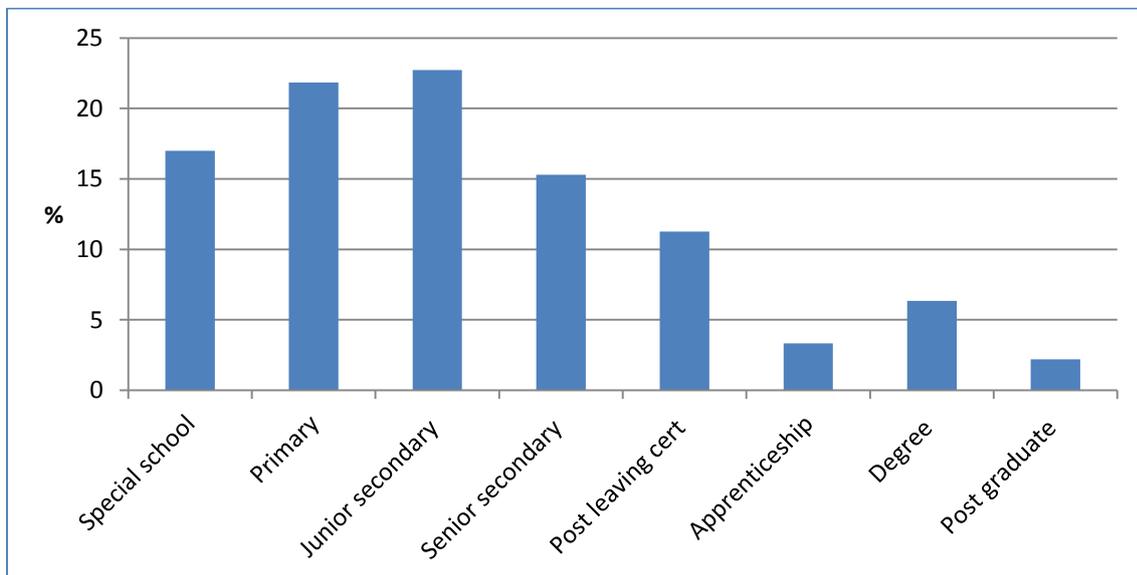
## 4 Selected Survey Results

The survey results presented in this section incorporate the weighting adjustment described in section 3.4, and unless otherwise stated are based on the **percentage distribution of completed responses to each question**.

Survey question numbers are quoted wherever relevant. Full details of each question are given in Appendix 1 below, along with a detailed breakdown of responses.

### 4.1 Educational experience and ambitions

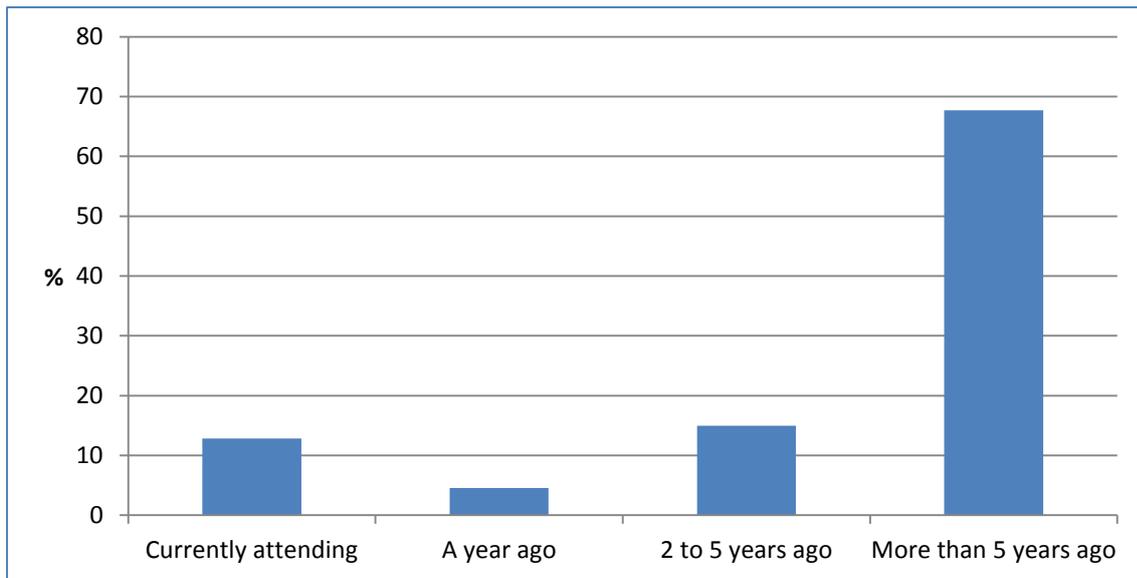
**Figure 10: Disability allowance recipients by highest level of education**  
(Source: DSP)



Disability Allowance recipients were asked to specify their highest level of educational attended (Q.1)<sup>9</sup>. Only a minority of recipients reported educational attainment beyond junior secondary education (Junior/Inter/Group Certificate) or special school.

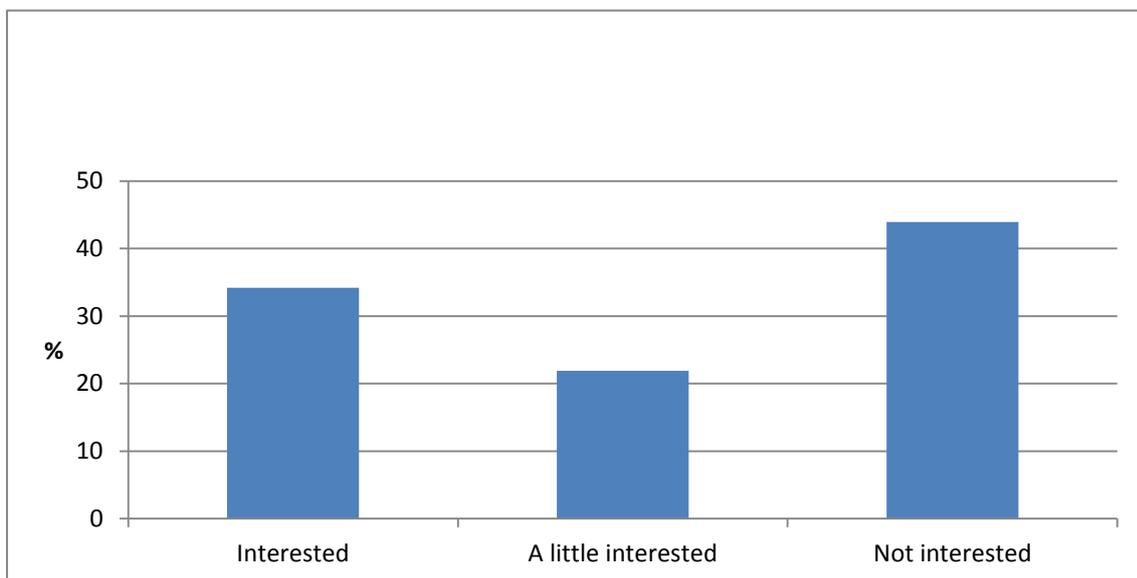
<sup>9</sup> We did not ask about *qualifications* attained but rather type of institution attended.

**Figure 11: Disability Allowance recipients by most recent education (Source: DSP)**



67% of respondents stated (Q.2) that it was more than five years since they last took part in education or training, while 13% are currently attending an education or training course.

**Figure 12: Disability Allowance recipients by interest in education (Source: DSP)**



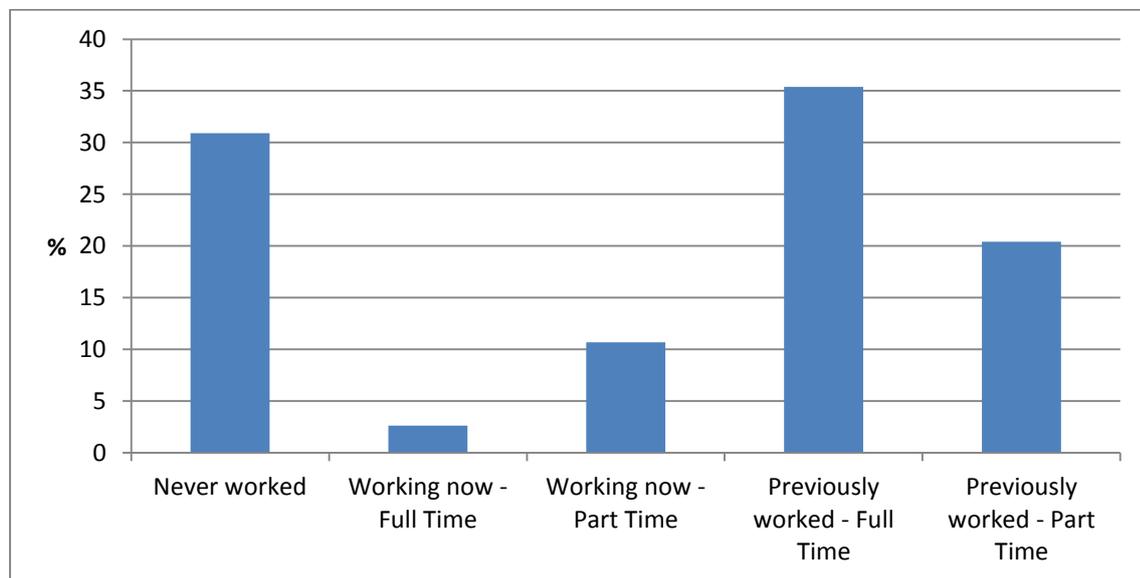
Finally (Q.3), respondents were asked if they were interested in education or training. 56% said they would be interested or a little interested in education or training, while 44% were not interested.

## 4.2 Employment experience and ambitions

Q.4 asked recipients about their employment experience. 31% of those who replied to this question stated that they had never worked, 56% stated they had previously worked (full-time or part-time), and 13% said they are currently working (part-time or full-time).

These results are in line with administrative estimates which suggest that approximately 10% of all Disability Allowance recipients are availing of the earnings disregard in order to work while retaining their Disability Allowance claim.

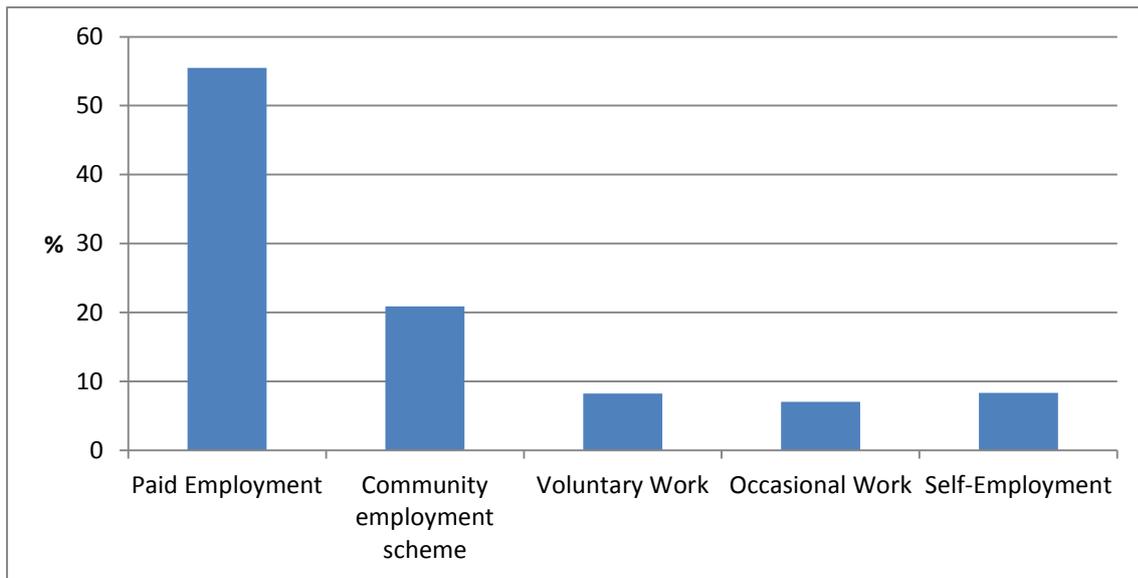
**Figure 13: Disability Allowance recipients by employment experience (Source: DSP)**



We then asked those people with current or former work experience for further details about their employment history.

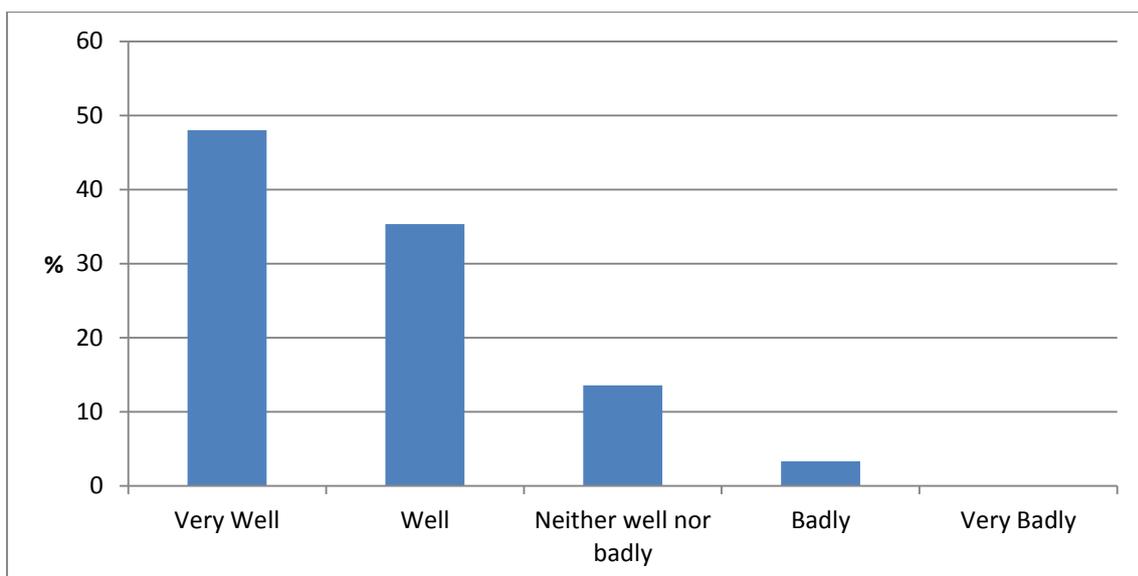
Respondents first indicated what type of job they hold (or most recently held) (Q.8): 63% are or were in paid employment or self-employed, while the remainder reported that their most recent experience was in community, voluntary or ‘occasional’ work.

**Figure 14: Disability Allowance recipients by most recent employment type**  
(Source: DSP)

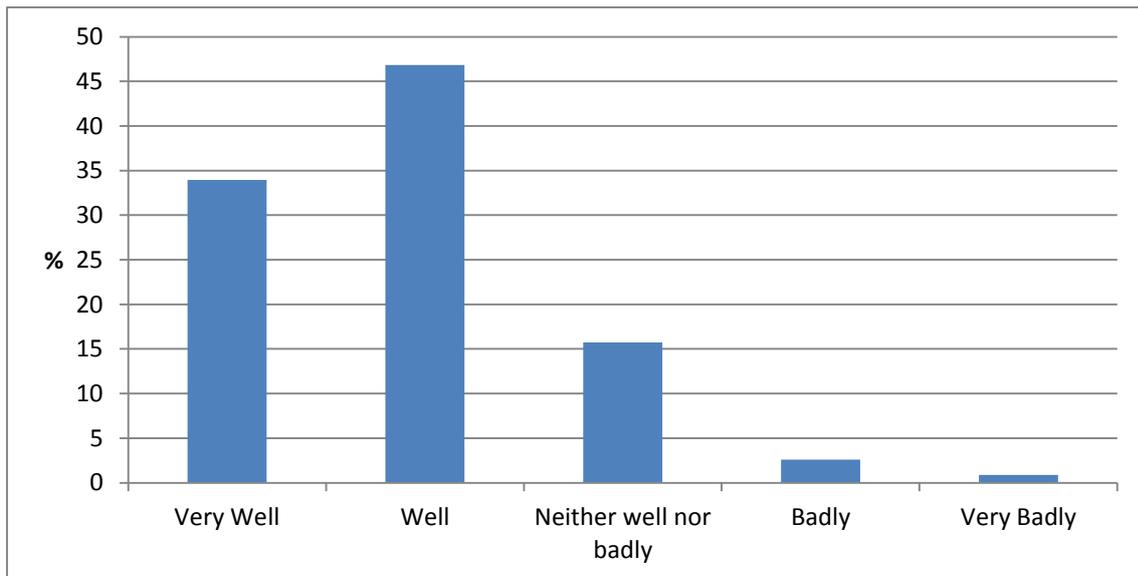


Next, we asked the 13% of people who said they were currently in employment how their work is going for them (Q.9). A very large majority of both those working full-time (83%) and part time (81%) said that work was going well or very well for them. For both full and part-time workers, only 3% reported that work was going badly or very badly.

**Figure 15: How work is going for Disability Allowance recipients reporting current full-time employment** (Source: DSP)



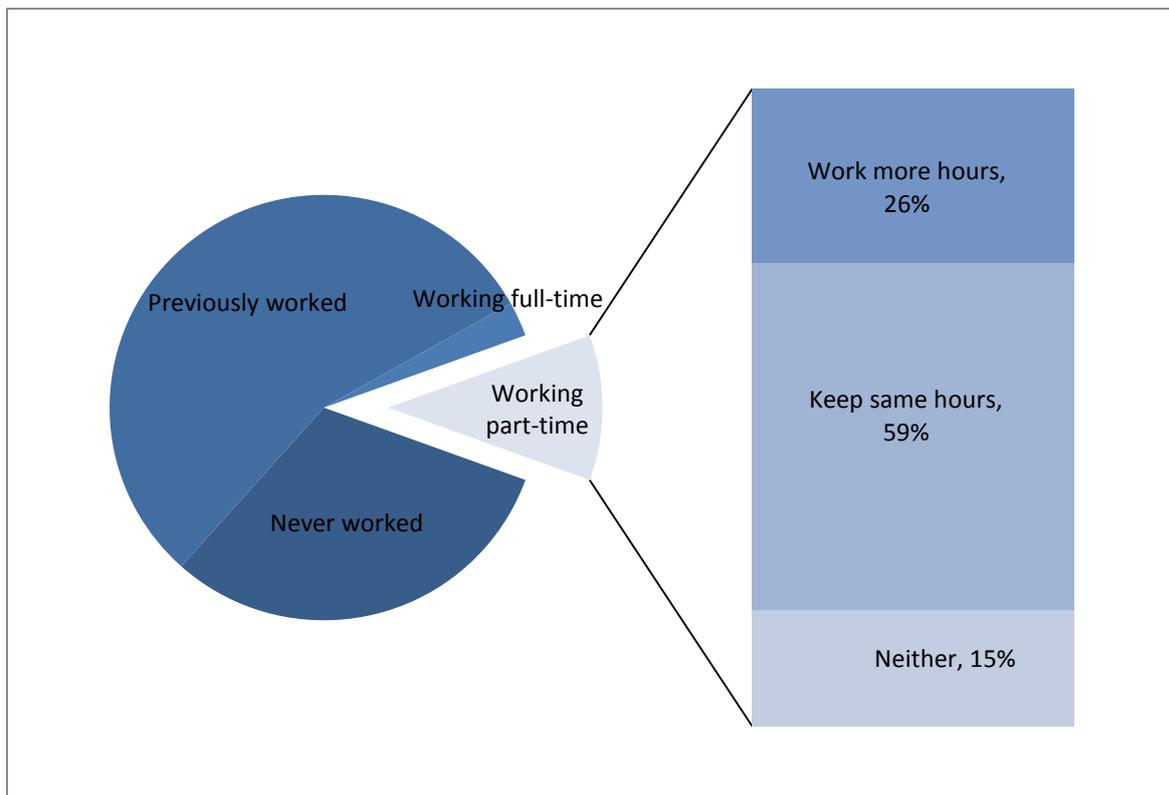
**Figure 16: How work is going for Disability Allowance recipients reporting current part-time employment (Source: DSP)**



We then asked people who are currently working to say if they would like to keep working the same hours or increase the number of hours worked (Q.5 part 2).

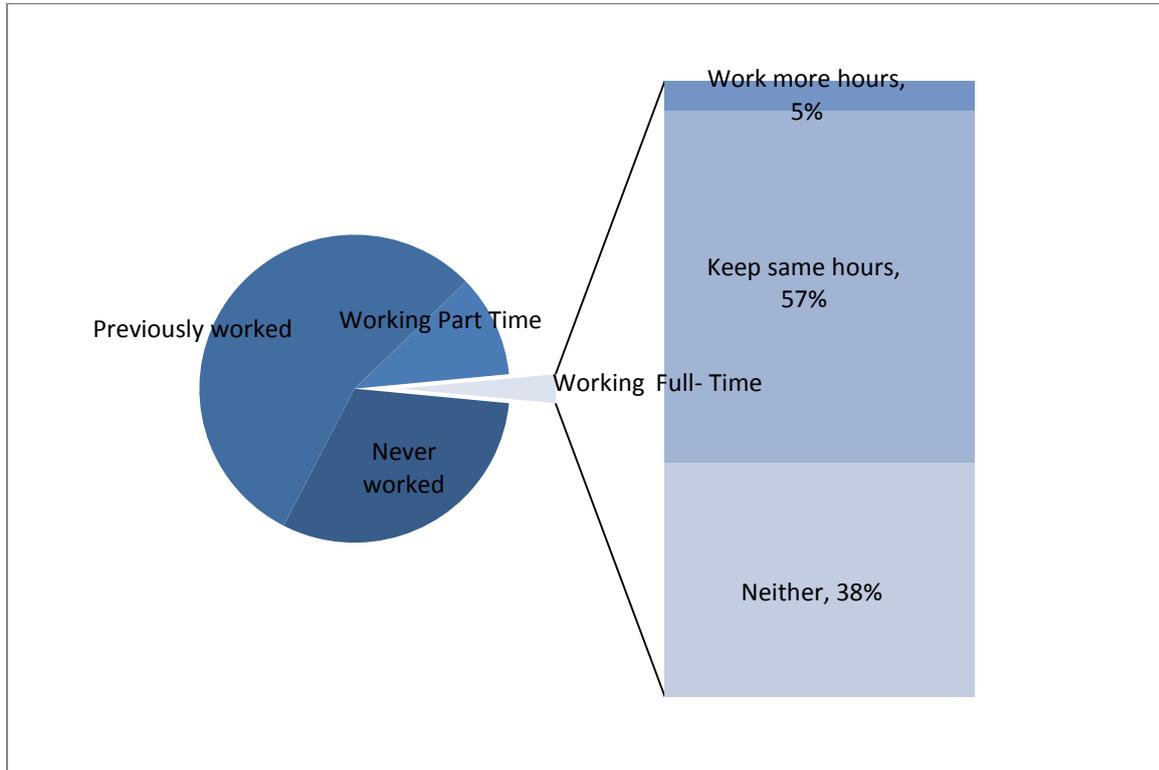
Of those working part time, 26% said they would like to work more hours while 59% indicated they wanted to keep working the same hours.

**Figure 17: Disability Allowance recipients in part-time employment: desired hours worked in relation to current hours worked (source: DSP)**



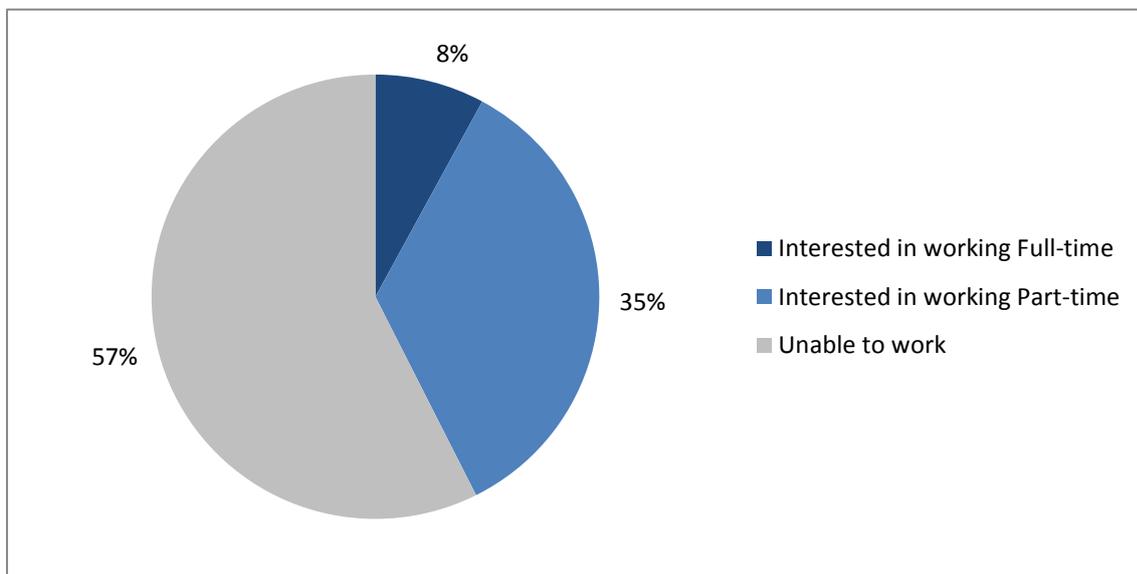
Even among those who said they were working full time, 5% said that they would like to work *more* hours, while 57% said they would like to keep working the same hours.

**Figure 18: Disability Allowance recipients in full-time employment: desired hours worked in relation to current hours worked (source: DSP)**



Finally, we asked people who are **not currently working** to tell us about their **employment ambitions given the right supports** (Q.5 part 1). Of those who completed this question, 35% expressed an interest in working part time, while 8% expressed an interest in full time employment.

**Figure 19: Interest in employment among Disability Allowance recipients who are not currently working (Source: DSP)**

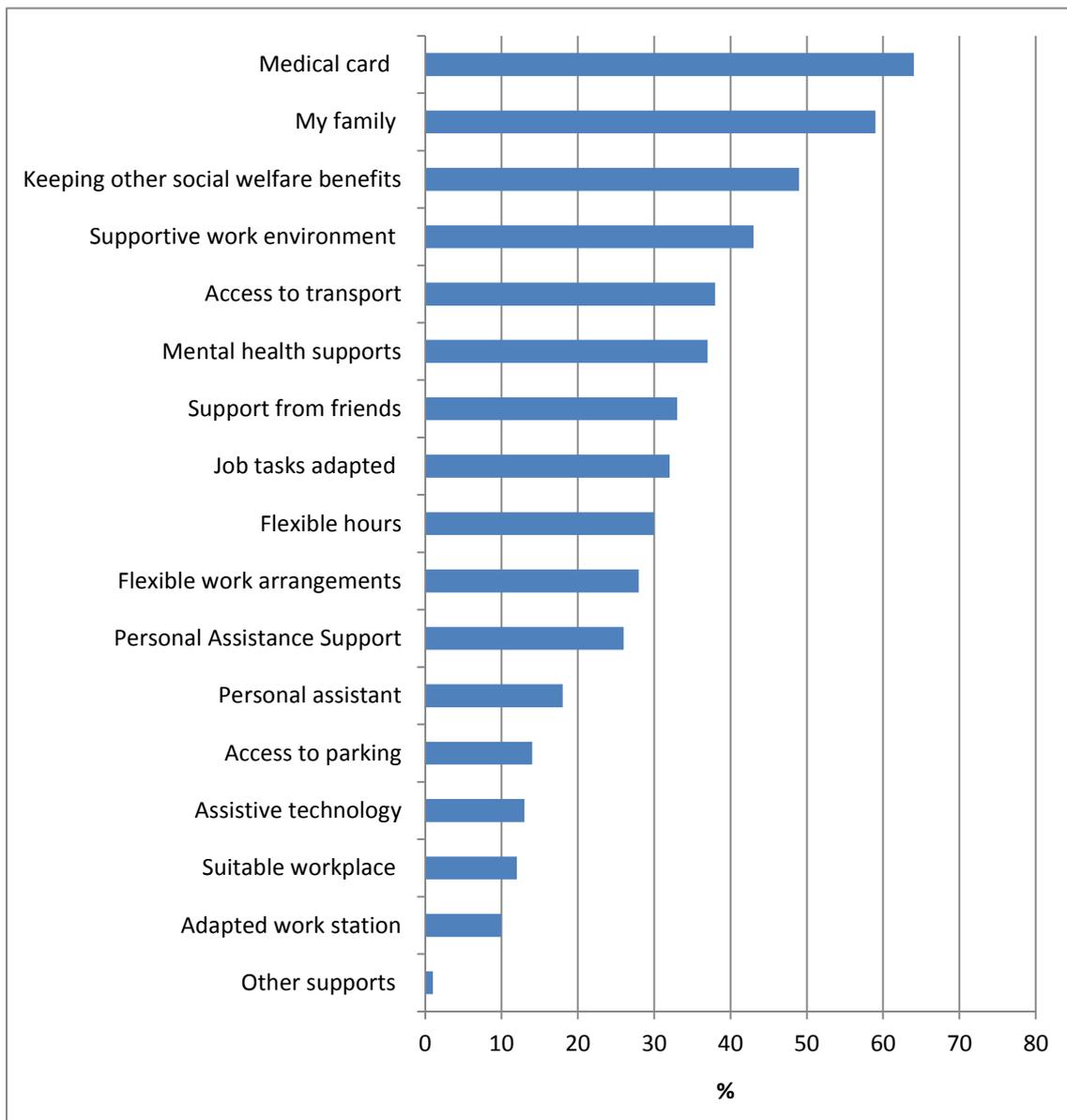


### 4.3 Employment supports

We asked respondents what supports are important in helping them achieve their employment ambitions and goals (Q.6), in order of importance<sup>10</sup>.

'My medical card' was the most often *mentioned* support (cited by 64% of respondents), with 'My family', mentioned by 59% of respondents, in second place.

**Figure 20: Supports mentioned by Disability Allowance recipients as important to helping achieve their employment ambitions and goals. A Respondent may mention multiple supports. (Source: DSP)**



<sup>10</sup> Of those who gave an answer to this question, most completed it according to the instructions by giving an **ordinal ranking from most to least important**. However, a significant minority of respondents **did not provide a ranking** of the items mentioned as important – for example, putting a tick or X in a number of boxes, or marking several items with '1'. In this report, we have therefore included tables and graphs relating to '**mentioned**' items (where percentages are based on the total number of people who gave *any answer* to the question), rather than '**top-ranked**' items (where percentages are based on the total number of people who gave a *correctly ordered answer* to the question).

#### 4.4 Barriers to employment

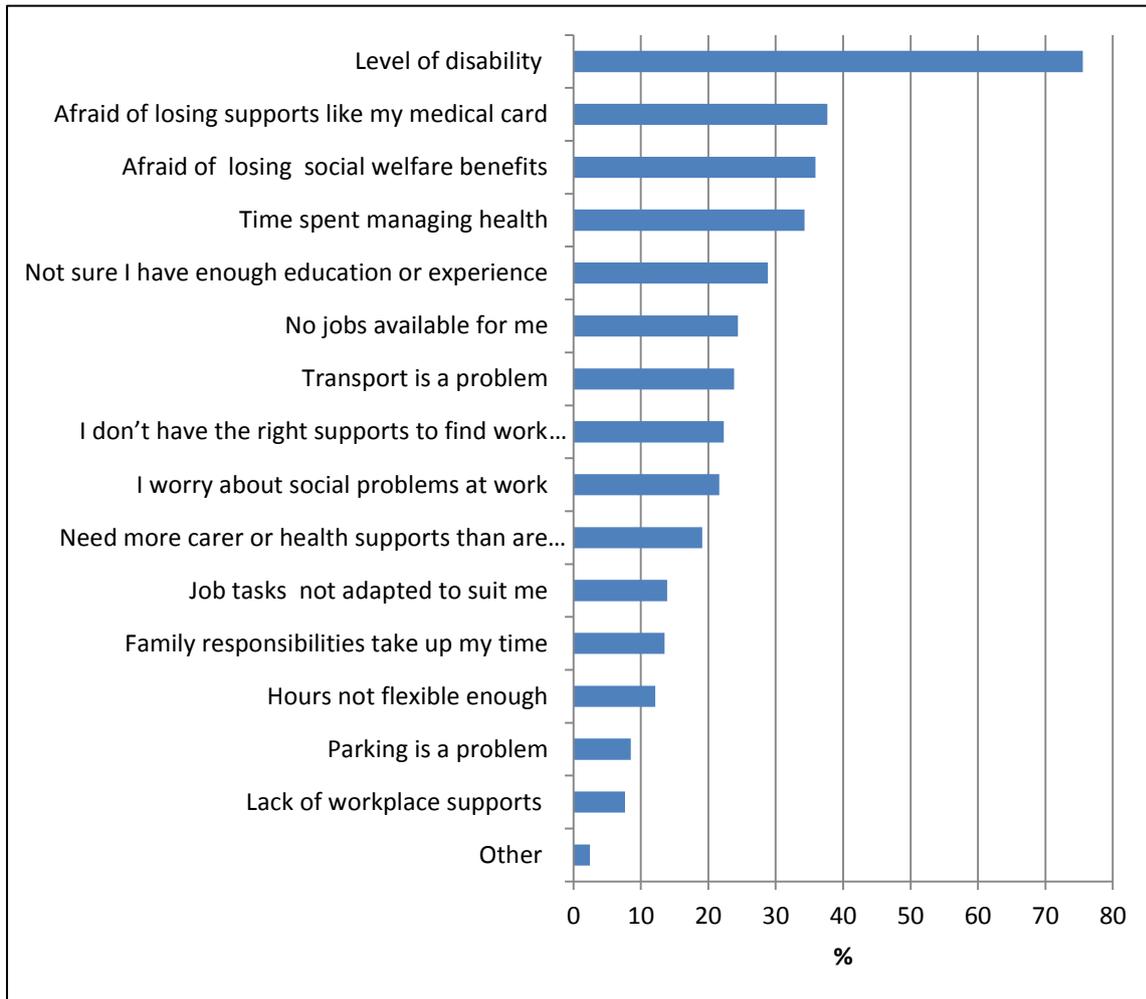
We next asked respondents “Are there reasons that prevent you from achieving your employment ambitions and goals?” (Q.7)<sup>11</sup> A very large majority of respondents – 75% – mentioned their level of disability as a barrier to achieving their goals. This was cited twice as often as the next most mentioned barriers – fear of losing medical card (38%) or social welfare benefit entitlements (36%), and time spent managing health (34%).

---

<sup>11</sup> Of those who gave an answer to this question, most completed it according to the instructions by giving an **ordinal ranking from most to least important**. However, a significant minority of respondents **did not provide a ranking** of the items mentioned as important – for example, putting a tick or X in a number of boxes, or marking several items with ‘1’.

In this report, we have therefore included tables and graphs relating to ‘**mentioned**’ items (where percentages are based on the total number of people who gave *any answer* to the question), rather than ‘**top-ranked**’ items (based on the total number of people who gave a *correctly ordered answer* to the question).

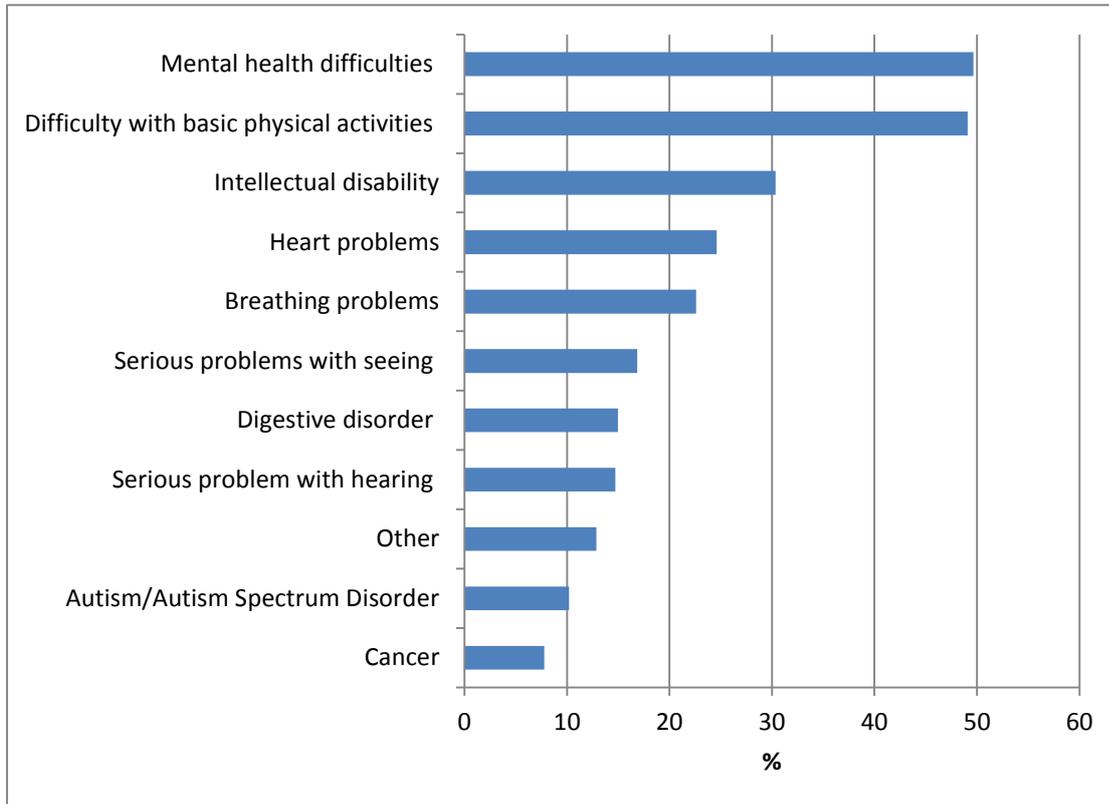
**Figure 21: Reasons mentioned by Disability Allowance recipients as preventing them from achieving their employment ambitions and goals. A respondent may mention multiple reasons. (Source: DSP)**



## 4.5 Health

We asked respondents to rank the health issues that affect them, from most to least important (Q.11)<sup>12</sup>. 50% of those who completed this question reported mental health issues and 49% reported that they had mobility issues.

**Figure 22: Incapacity, illnesses or disabilities indicated (Source: DSP)**

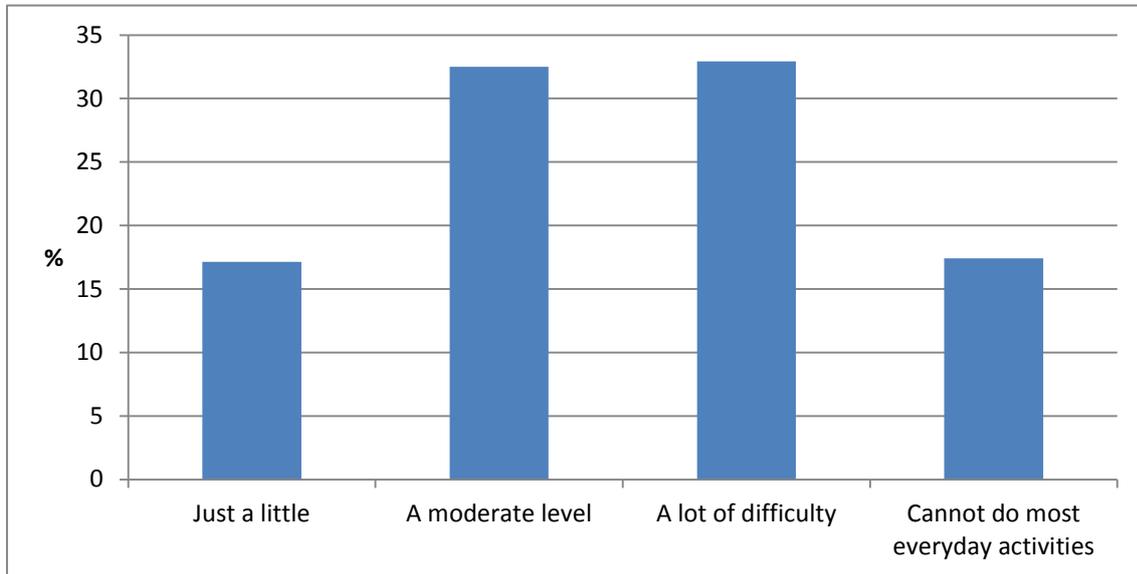


<sup>12</sup> Of those who gave an answer to this question, most completed it according to the instructions by giving an **ordinal ranking from most to least important**. However, a significant minority of respondents **did not provide a ranking** of the items mentioned as important – for example, putting a tick or X in a number of boxes, or marking several items with ‘1’.

In this report, we have therefore included tables and graphs relating to ‘**mentioned**’ items (where percentages are based on the total number of people who gave *any answer* to the question), rather than ‘**top-ranked**’ items (based on the total number of people who gave a *correctly ordered answer* to the question).

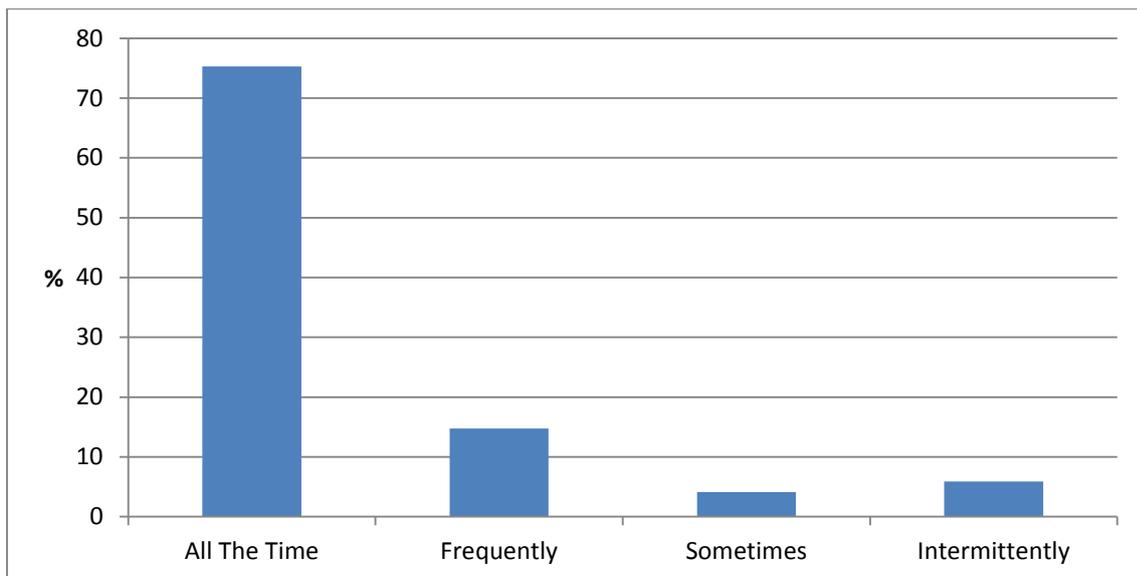
Recipients were then asked to describe their level of difficulty with doing everyday activities (1Q.12). 83% stated that they had moderate or severe difficulty in completing, or were unable to complete, everyday tasks.

**Figure 23: Disability Allowance recipients by level of difficulty with everyday activities (Source: DSP)**



Finally, respondents were asked to describe how often their disability affects them (Q.13). A large majority, 75%, stated that their disability affects them all of the time.

**Figure 24: How often Disability Allowance customers report their illness or disability affects them (source: DSP)**



## Appendix 1 Survey Questionnaire

**This part of the survey asks about your education.**

Q. 1 What is the highest level of education that you have attended? Please tick the box that applies to you.

Type of Education	
Special school	
Primary	
Junior secondary (Junior Cert/inter cert/group cert)	
Senior secondary (Leaving Cert)	
Post leaving cert course, certificate or diploma	
Apprenticeship	
Degree level	
Post graduate degree level	

Q.2 How long ago did you last take part in education or training?

Currently attending	A year ago	2 to 5 years ago	More than 5 years ago
---------------------	------------	------------------	-----------------------

Q. 3 How interested would you be in education or training courses? Please tick one.

Interested	A little interested	Not interested
------------	---------------------	----------------

**This part of the survey asks about your employment experience.**

Q. 4 Please tick the box that applies to you.

I have never worked	I am working now		I have worked previously but am not currently working	
	<b>Full Time</b>	<b>Part Time</b>	<b>Full Time</b>	<b>Part Time</b>

**Employment ambitions and goals given the right supports**

Q. 5 Please tick the boxes that apply to you

I am not working right now and...

- I am unable to work
- I am interested in working – Full time – A little interested
- Interested

– Part time    - A little interested   

- Interested   

I am currently working and I'd like to...

➤ Keep working the same hours   

➤ Work more hours   

**Q. 6 What supports are important in helping you achieve your employment ambitions and goals?**

Please write 1, 2, 3, and so on beside each option that applies to you, where 1 is the support that is most important to you. There is no need to place a number beside an option that does not apply to you.

My family	
Personal Assistance Support (including health supports such as physiotherapy)	
Mental health supports	
A personal assistant	
My medical card	
Keeping other social welfare benefits	
Access to transport	
Access to parking	
A suitable workplace that includes ramps, handrails and so on	
Adapted work station	
Assistive technology to help me do the job	
Flexible hours	
Job tasks adapted to suit me	
Flexible work arrangements	
Support from friends	
Supportive work environment that accepts people with disabilities	
Other supports (write below)	

Q. 7 Are there reasons that prevent you from achieving your employment ambitions and goals?

Please write 1, 2, 3, and so on beside each option that applies to you, where 1 is the reason that is most important to you. There is no need to place a number beside an option that does not apply to you.

My level of disability or illness	
Managing my health takes up too much of my time	
I am afraid I would lose supports like my medical card	
I am afraid I would lose my social welfare payments or benefits	
I would need more carer or health supports than are available	
Transport is a problem	
Parking is a problem	
Lack of workplace supports such as ramps, handrails	
The hours are not flexible enough	
The job tasks are not adapted to suit me	
Family responsibilities take up my time	
I don't have the right supports to find work that would be suitable for me	
There are no jobs available for me	
I am not sure I have enough education or experience	
I worry about social problems at work	
Other reason (write below)	

**If you have never worked, please go to Question 11 now.**

Q.8 Please tick the type of employment you have, or most recently had.

Paid employment	
Community Employment, FÁS Scheme or Tús Scheme	
Voluntary work	
Occasional work	
Self-employment	

Q. 9 If you are in work, how are things working out for you?

Very well	Well	Neither well nor	Badly	Very badly

Q. 10 If you are no longer in work, why did you leave that work?

--

**This part of the survey asks questions about your disability or illness.**

Q.11 Starting with your main disability or illness, please list them in order.

Please write 1, 2, 3, and so on beside each option that applies to you, where 1 is the main disability or illness that affects you the most. There is no need to place a number beside an option that does not apply to you.

A difficulty with basic physical activities such as walking, sitting or carrying	
Serious problems with seeing	
Serious problem with hearing	
An intellectual disability	
Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder	
Mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and psychosis	
Heart problems such as angina, history of heart attack, high blood pressure	
Breathing problems such as asthma, bronchitis	
Digestive disorder such as Crohn's disease, bowel problems	
Cancer	
Any other chronic illness or condition (please write below)	

Q.12 How would you best describe your level of difficulty with doing everyday activities?

Please tick one option.

Just a little	
A moderate level	
A lot of difficulty	
Cannot do most everyday activities	

Q.13 What is the best description of how often your disability or illness affects you?

Please tick one option.

All the time (all the time or most days)	
Frequently (most weeks)	
Sometimes (about once or twice a month)	
Intermittently (less than once a month or unpredictable)	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

**Your responses cannot legally be shared with anybody outside of the Statistics Unit of the Department of Social Protection. Your responses cannot affect your current or future Social Welfare claims.**

## Appendix 2 Survey questions and detailed responses

In this Appendix, the **question text**, *explanatory text* and **response boxes** for each question in the Disability Survey questionnaire are given *verbatim*.

In addition, detailed information on the responses to each question is given in a dedicated table immediately below the question.

*This part of the survey asks about your education experience.*

### Q.1. What is the highest level of education that you have attended?

*Please tick the box that applies to you.*

Type of Education	
Special school	
Primary	
Junior secondary (Junior Cert/inter cert/group cert)	
Senior secondary (Leaving Cert)	
Post leaving cert course, certificate or diploma	
Apprenticeship	
Degree level	
Post graduate degree level	

**Table 2: Highest level of education attended (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
<b>Special School</b>	496	1,925	80.6	17
<b>Primary</b>	681	2,474	85.4	22
<b>Junior secondary (Junior/Inter/Group Cert)</b>	695	2,576	88.3	23
<b>Senior secondary (Leaving Cert)</b>	455	1,734	77.0	15
<b>Post leaving cert course, certificate or diploma</b>	336	1,276	67.1	11
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	107	377	36.4	3
<b>Degree Level</b>	178	719	53.7	6
<b>Post graduate degree level</b>	67	250	30.8	2
<b>NOT COMPLETED</b>	183	675	49.2	
<b>Total</b>	3,198	12,005	38.6	

**Q.2. How long ago did you last take part in education or training?**

Currently attending	A year ago	2 to 5 years ago	More than 5 years ago
---------------------	------------	------------------	-----------------------

**Table 3: Time passed since last in education or training (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
Currently attending	339	1,365	71.6	13
A year ago	123	482	43.5	5
2 to 5 years ago	405	1,595	76.0	15
More than 5 years ago	1,963	7,208	104.6	68
<b>NOT COMPLETED</b>	368	1,355	67.6	
<b>Total</b>	3,198	12,005	38.6	

**Q.3. How interested would you be in education or training courses?**

*Please tick one.*

Interested	A little interested	Not interested
------------	---------------------	----------------

**Table 4: Level of interest in education or training courses (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
Interested	968	3,754	103.6	34
A little interested	634	2,402	87.2	22
Not interested	1,319	4,821	104.0	44
<b>NOT COMPLETED</b>	277	1,028	60.1	
<b>Total</b>	3,198	12,005	38.6	

*This part of the survey asks about your employment experience.*

#### Q.4. Past employment experience

*Please tick the box that applies to you.*

I have never worked	I am working now		I have worked previously but am not currently working	
	<b>Full Time</b>	<b>Part Time</b>	<b>Full Time</b>	<b>Part Time</b>

**Table 5: Past employment experience (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
<b>I have never worked</b>	829	3,267	99.9	31
<b>I am working now - Full Time</b>	72	275	32.7	3
<b>I am working now - Part Time</b>	295	1,130	63.8	11
<b>Worked previously, not currently - Full Time</b>	1,039	3,740	97.4	35
<b>Worked previously, not currently - Part Time</b>	574	2,156	83.1	20
<b>NOT COMPLETED</b>	389	1,437	69.4	
<b>Total</b>	3,198	12,005	38.6	

### Q.5. Employment ambitions and goals given the right supports

Please tick the boxes that apply to you

I am not working right now and...

- I am unable to work
- I am interested in working – Full time – A little interested
- Interested
- Part time – A little interested
- Interested

I am currently working and I'd like to...

- Keep working the same hours
- Work more hours

**Table 6: Employment ambitions and goals given the right supports (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
Some interest in working full-time	48	188	27.3	2
Some interest in working part-time	327	1,237	65.5	12
Unable to work	1,656	6,076	99.4	57
Very interested in working full-time	156	630	50.2	6
Very interested in working part-time	633	2,439	87.4	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,820</b>	<b>10,570</b>	<b>36.5</b>	
<b>Currently working part-time</b>				
Keep same hours	175	666	33.3	59
Work more hours	76	299	30.4	26
Neither	44	165	23.4	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>1,130</b>	<b>12.0</b>	
<b>Currently working full-time</b>				
Keep same hours	40	158	17.5	57
Work more hours	3	13	7.4	5
Neither	29	104	15.5	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>6.2</b>	

**Q.6. What supports are important in helping you achieve your employment ambitions and goals?**

*Please write 1, 2, 3, and so on beside each option that applies to you, where 1 is the support that is most important to you. There is no need to place a number beside an option that does not apply to you.*

My family	
Personal Assistance Support (including health supports such as physiotherapy)	
Mental health supports	
A personal assistant	
My medical card	
Keeping other social welfare benefits	
Access to transport	
Access to parking	
A suitable workplace that includes ramps, handrails and so on	
Adapted work station	
Assistive technology to help me do the job	
Flexible hours	
Job tasks adapted to suit me	
Flexible work arrangements	
Support from friends	
Supportive work environment that accepts people with disabilities	
Other supports (write below)	

**Table 7: Supports identified to help achieve employment ambitions & goals**  
 (Source: DSP)

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
<b>My family</b>	1,463	5,629	27.7	59
<b>Personal Assistance Support (including health supports such as physiotherapy)</b>	651	2,462	17.5	26
<b>Mental health supports</b>	929	3,567	22.4	37
<b>A personal assistant</b>	443	1,680	13.8	18
<b>My medical card</b>	1,604	6,071	28.0	64
<b>Keeping other social welfare benefits</b>	1,239	4,695	24.4	49
<b>Access to transport</b>	943	3,592	21.6	38
<b>Access to parking</b>	361	1,343	12.4	14
<b>A suitable workplace that includes ramps, handrails and so on</b>	311	1,173	11.4	12
<b>Adapted work station</b>	261	987	10.8	10
<b>Assistive technology to help me do the job</b>	327	1,252	13.0	13
<b>Flexible hours</b>	740	2,838	20.2	30
<b>Job tasks adapted to suit me</b>	786	3,026	20.9	32
<b>Flexible work arrangements</b>	699	2,670	18.8	28
<b>Support from friends</b>	829	3,161	20.7	33
<b>Supportive work environment that accepts people with disabilities</b>	1,044	4,053	23.4	43
<b>Other supports</b>	28	109	4.0	1

**Q.7. Are there reasons that prevent you from achieving your employment ambitions and goals?**

*Please write 1, 2, 3, and so on beside each option that applies to you, where 1 is the reason that is most important to you. There is no need to place a number beside an option that does not apply to you.*

My level of disability or illness	
Managing my health takes up too much of my time	
I am afraid I would lose supports like my medical card	
I am afraid I would lose my social welfare payments or benefits	
I would need more carer or health supports than are available	
Transport is a problem	
Parking is a problem	
Lack of workplace supports such as ramps, handrails	
The hours are not flexible enough	
The job tasks are not adapted to suit me	
Family responsibilities take up my time	
I don't have the right supports to find work that would be suitable for me	
There are no jobs available for me	
I am not sure I have enough education or experience	
I worry about social problems at work	
Other reason (write below)	

**Table 8: Barriers identified preventing achievement of employment ambitions & goals (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
My level of disability or illness	2,227	8,351	32.2	76
Managing my health takes up too much of my time	1,018	3,790	21.9	34
I am afraid I would lose supports like my medical card	1,105	4,163	22.9	38
I am afraid I would lose my social welfare payments or benefits	1,046	3,969	23.0	36
I would need more carer or health supports than are available	554	2,110	15.6	19
Transport is a problem	700	2,636	17.8	24
Parking is a problem	252	943	10.5	9
Lack of workplace supports such as ramps, handrails	224	848	10.0	8
The hours are not flexible enough	351	1,341	13.1	12
The job tasks are not adapted to suit me	396	1,536	13.4	14
Family responsibilities take up my time	395	1,494	13.6	14
I don't have the right supports to find work that would be suitable for me	646	2,464	18.6	22
There are no jobs available for me	711	2,695	18.9	24
I am not sure I have enough education or experience	826	3,189	21.2	29
I worry about social problems at work	615	2,392	18.8	22
Other reason	70	269	5.3	2

If you have never worked, please go to Question 11 now.

**Q.8. Please tick the type of employment you have, or most recently had.**

Paid employment	
Community Employment, FÁS Scheme or Tús Scheme	
Voluntary work	
Occasional work	
Self-employment	

**Table 9: Most recent employment by type (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
<b>Paid Employment</b>	979	3,649	99.6	56
<b>Community Employment, FÁS or TÚS</b>	370	1,373	68.1	21
<b>Voluntary Work</b>	142	542	45.3	8
<b>Occasional Work</b>	123	462	41.5	7
<b>Self-Employment</b>	160	547	42.7	8
<b>NOT COMPLETED</b>	1,424	5,432	110.4	
<b>Total</b>	3,198	12,005	38.6	

**Q.9. If you are in work, how are things working out for you?**

Very well	Well	Neither well nor	Badly	Very badly

**Table 10: Experience of those currently in part-time employment (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
Very Well	21	83	15.7	48
Well	15	61	14.4	35
Neither well nor badly	6	23	9.4	14
Badly	2	6	4.1	3
Very Badly	0	0	0.0	0
NOT COMPLETED	28	103	15.7	
Total	72	275	6.2	

**Table 11: Experience of those currently in full-time employment (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
Very Well	86	330	30.4	34
Well	116	455	34.0	47
Neither well nor badly	41	153	22.7	16
Badly	8	25	8.9	3
Very Badly	2	9	6.1	1
NOT COMPLETED	42	158	23.0	
Total	295	1,130	12.0	

**Q.10. If you are no longer in work, why did you leave that work?**

This question allowed for a free text response from participants, the overwhelming majority of whom (some 65%), cited their illness or disability as the reason why they left work. The remaining responses were too diverse to tabulate here but are available for analysis on request.

*This part of the survey asks questions about your disability or illness.*

**Q.11. Starting with your main disability or illness, please list them in order.**

*Please write 1, 2, 3, and so on beside each option that applies to you, where 1 is the main disability or illness that affects you the most. There is no need to place a number beside an option that does not apply to you.*

A difficulty with basic physical activities such as walking, sitting or carrying	
Serious problems with seeing	
Serious problem with hearing	
An intellectual disability	
Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder	
Mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and psychosis	
Heart problems such as angina, history of heart attack, high blood pressure	
Breathing problems such as asthma, bronchitis	
Digestive disorder such as Crohn's disease, bowel problems	
Cancer	
Any other chronic illness or condition (please write below)	

**Table 12: Main disability or illness (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
A difficulty with basic physical activities such as walking, sitting or carrying	1,558	5,710	25.3	49
Serious problems with seeing	526	1,961	14.8	17
Serious problem with hearing	466	1,711	14.0	15
An intellectual disability	913	3,531	20.1	30
Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder	297	1,186	13.1	10
Mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and psychosis	1,524	5,774	27.5	50
Heart problems such as angina, history of heart attack, high blood pressure	791	2,861	17.4	25
Breathing problems such as asthma, bronchitis	712	2,627	17.6	23
Digestive disorder such as Crohn's disease, bowel problems	475	1,739	13.9	15
Cancer	248	904	10.2	8
Any other chronic illness or condition	394	1,495	13.8	13

**Q.12. How would you best describe your level of difficulty with doing everyday activities?***Please tick one option.*

Just a little	
A moderate level	
A lot of difficulty	
Cannot do most everyday activities	

**Table 13: Level of difficulty with everyday activities (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
Just a little	513	1,961	80.8	17
A moderate level	983	3,717	101.0	33
A lot of difficulty	1,009	3,765	100.5	33
Cannot do most everyday activities	543	1,992	79.4	17
QUESTION NOT ANSWERED	150	571	46.2	
Total	3,198	12,005	38.6	

### Q.13. What is the best description of how often your disability or illness affects you?

Please tick one option.

All the time (all the time or most days)	
Frequently (most weeks)	
Sometimes (about once or twice a month)	
Intermittently (less than once a month or unpredictable)	

**Table 14: Frequency of impact of disability or illness (Source: DSP)**

	Unweighted responses (number)	Weighted Responses		
		Number	Standard Error	Percentage
<b>All The Time</b>	2,309	8,642	100.4	75
<b>Frequently</b>	448	1,690	75.5	15
<b>Sometimes</b>	122	474	42.9	4
<b>Intermittently</b>	178	673	49.6	6
<b>QUESTION NOT ANSWERED</b>	141	525	43.9	
<b>Total</b>	3,198	12,005	38.6	

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.*

*Your responses cannot legally be shared with anybody outside of the Statistics Unit of the Department of Social Protection. Your responses cannot affect your current or future Social Welfare claims.*

*Tá Leagan Ghaeilge den Bhfoirm seo ar fáil*

## Appendix 3 Survey cover letter and supporting documentation

[CUSTOMER ADDRESS]

[CUSTOMER ADDRESS]

[XX] October 2015

Dear [Mr/Ms XXXX],

I'm writing to ask for your help in understanding how the Department of Social Protection can improve its services to Disability Allowance customers.

I'd be really grateful if you can answer the questions in the survey form that's in this pack. It shouldn't take too long to complete and it's fine to get somebody to help you. When you are finished please send me the survey form using the Freepost envelope. It would be very helpful if you can send me the form within ten days.

By law, your answers are totally private and confidential. Your answers can't affect your Disability Allowance claim in any way.

I've tried to give answers to some questions you may have about the survey on the back of this letter. If you have any other questions please contact my team at (01) 704-0599 or at [DASurvey@welfare.ie](mailto:DASurvey@welfare.ie) and we will be happy to help. In this pack, there's also a list of organisations who are supporting this survey.

Yours sincerely,



---

Ciaran Judge

Chief Statistician

Department of Social Protection

Here are answers to some questions you may have about the survey.

**Can someone help me finish the survey?**

Answer: Yes. Please call us on 01-704-0599 if you would like some help. Your local Citizen's Information Centre will also be happy to help you complete the survey should you require their assistance. Please check your local phone directory for contact details. A friend or family member can also help you.

**Why is it important to take part in this survey?**

Answer: There are people with disabilities and illness who are interested in work but feel that they are not supported in the ways they need. We want to know more about how we could support them better.

**Will this affect my Disability Allowance?**

Answer: No.

- Your responses cannot affect your current or future Social Welfare claims.
- Your responses cannot legally be shared with anybody outside of the Statistics Unit of the Department of Social Protection.

**Do I have to complete the survey?**

Answer: No. We appreciate that some people may not be in a position or may not wish to complete this survey and that's ok too.

**How many people were sent this survey?**

Answer: This survey has been sent to 12,000 people with disabilities and illness who receive Disability Allowance. Your name has been selected randomly.

*This survey has been developed with the assistance of the National Disability Authority.*

Here is a list of some organisations that were consulted in the preparation of this survey and have lent their support to it.

Your local Citizen's Information Centre will be happy to help you complete the survey should you require their assistance. Please check your local phone directory for contact details.

