
Notes

The tables in this section provide data on the outcomes of applications for disability benefits. The data on applications are derived from the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) Disability Research File maintained by the Office of Disability Programs. Each year this file is updated with information about applications for disability benefits that is then used to determine the outcome of those applications. The outcome data in these tables are reported by year of filing and include decisions made through the administrative appeals process.

Table 52 shows the total number of applications filed in a year, the number denied for nonmedical reasons before a medical decision is made (technical denials), the number that are pending a final decision, the outcome of applications for which a medical allowance or denial was made, and award and allowance rates. Applications for which a medical allowance or denial decision was made but which were subsequently denied for nonmedical reasons are shown under the medical decision header as subsequent denials. The most common nonmedical reason for denying a claim is insufficient number of recent work credits.

The allowance rate is calculated by dividing the number of medical allowances (including subsequent technical denials) by the total number of medical decisions made for a 1-year cohort. The award rate is a broader program measure that is calculated as the number of allowances minus subsequent denials divided by total applications (minus pending claims) filed for a given year.

Claims that remain pending after 6 years are probably the result of imperfect data rather than excessive delays in the decisionmaking process. It is highly probable that decisions have been rendered on most of the older claims. For more recent years, the award and allowance rates will change as decisions are made on pending claims.

Tables 53–55 show the allowance rate for Social Security only and the Social Security portion of concurrent applications (which are claims for both Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability benefits). Each table shows a different level in the administrative decisionmaking process, that is, initial, reconsideration, and hearing or higher level.

Beginning with 2000, the proportion of claims awarded at each level of the process changed as a result of the Prototype Process being tested in 10 states. Under this test, the reconsideration step of the appeals process was eliminated for applications filed October 1, 1999, or later. Elimination of the reconsideration level in these states results in a decrease in the aggregate proportion of claims awarded at this step.

This section includes one table that shows the reason for medical allowance and one that shows the reason for medical denial (Tables 56 and 57). The reasons are derived from the sequential evaluation process used by decisionmakers. SSA maintains a list of impairments that are considered disabling under its regulations. An applicant can be found to be disabled if he or she

- has a listed impairment,
- has a severe impairment that is equal to a listed impairment,
- has a severe impairment when medical and vocational factors are considered, or
- had previously established entitlement to a disability benefit.

An applicant can be denied benefits if he or she

- has an impairment that is not expected to last 12 months,
 - has an impairment that is not considered severe,
 - is able to perform his or her usual type of work,
 - is able to perform another type of work, or
 - has an impairment resulting from drug addiction or alcoholism, provides insufficient medical evidence, fails to cooperate, fails to follow prescribed treatment, does not want to continue development of the claim, or returns to substantial work before disability can be established.
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Outcomes of Applications for Disability Benefits

Table 52.
Outcomes at all adjudicative levels, by year of application, 1992–2002

Year	Total	Pending final decision	Technical denials ^a	Medical decisions				Award rate ^d (percent)	Allowance rate ^e (percent)
				Denials		Allowances			
				Medical	Subsequent nonmedical ^b	Awards	Subsequent denials ^c		
All disabled beneficiaries									
1999	1,265,055	8,207	104,315	441,001	4,077	705,595	1,860	56.1	61.5
2000	1,364,396	22,403	136,014	446,519	3,853	753,666	1,941	56.2	62.8
2001	1,504,773	83,114	170,323	468,687	3,709	776,982	1,958	54.7	62.3
2002	1,685,182	274,936	229,536	509,650	4,308	664,582	2,170	47.1	56.6
Workers									
1992	1,310,004	0	130,885	481,439	5,725	689,111	2,844	52.6	58.8
1993	1,384,501	0	140,314	540,906	5,626	695,007	2,648	50.2	56.2
1994	1,383,092	0	130,243	573,247	5,506	671,699	2,397	48.6	53.9
1995	1,301,472	0	123,714	542,346	5,049	628,127	2,236	48.3	53.6
1996	1,313,818	6,201	116,943	531,869	5,014	651,675	2,116	49.8	55.0
1997	1,164,680	5,552	106,820	445,222	4,217	601,010	1,859	51.9	57.4
1998	1,138,101	4,838	96,663	418,672	4,215	611,668	2,045	54.0	59.3
1999	1,167,664	8,070	102,291	414,599	4,029	636,887	1,788	54.9	60.5
2000	1,265,214	22,062	133,915	420,806	3,818	682,739	1,874	54.9	61.8
2001	1,408,135	81,967	168,045	442,927	3,664	709,629	1,903	53.5	61.5
2002	1,587,452	270,885	227,018	480,854	4,251	602,321	2,123	45.7	55.6
Widow(er)s									
1999	40,055	84	1,173	9,650	17	29,094	37	72.8	75.2
2000	39,996	188	1,256	8,929	11	29,583	29	74.3	76.9
2001	39,510	642	1,342	8,826	14	28,667	19	73.8	76.5
2002	38,574	2,333	1,510	9,150	19	25,546	16	70.5	73.6
Adult children									
1999	57,336	53	851	16,752	31	39,614	35	69.2	70.3
2000	59,186	153	843	16,784	24	41,344	38	70.0	71.2
2001	57,128	505	936	16,934	31	38,686	36	68.3	69.6
2002	59,156	1,718	1,008	19,646	38	36,715	31	63.9	65.2

SOURCE: Social Security Administration, Disability Research file, 100 percent data.

NOTES: Data for the initial and reconsideration levels are current through June 2003. Data for the hearing level or above are current through September 2003.

Because a number of applications remain pending for more recent years, the award and allowance rates will change over time. Cases can be pending at the initial or appellate levels and can include either medical or technical issues.

Data include decisions for Social Security–only applications and applications for both Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI); they do not include SSI-only applications.

Data for 1992–1998 are available for disabled workers only.

- a. Applications were denied for nonmedical reasons; therefore no decision was made on severity of impairment.
- b. Applications were denied for nonmedical reasons after a decision was made that the applicant did not meet the medical severity criteria for disability benefits.
- c. Applications were denied for nonmedical reasons after a decision was made that the applicant met the medical severity criteria for disability benefits.
- d. Rate determined by dividing awards by all applications minus pending claims for that year.
- e. Rate determined by dividing medical allowances by all medical decisions for that year.

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Outcomes of Applications for Disability Benefits

Table 53.
Medical decisions at the initial adjudicative level, by year of application and program, 1992–2002

Year	All decisions			Decisions on applications for Social Security only			Decisions on applications for both Social Security and SSI		
	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^a (percent)	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^a (percent)	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^{a,b} (percent)
All disabled beneficiaries									
1999	1,160,634	459,999	39.6	649,825	313,676	48.3	510,809	146,323	28.6
2000	1,228,138	501,946	40.9	688,123	340,331	49.5	540,015	161,615	29.9
2001	1,333,578	553,880	41.5	734,786	374,350	50.9	598,792	179,530	30.0
2002	1,453,089	555,725	38.2	772,283	369,462	47.8	680,806	186,263	27.4
Workers									
1992	1,179,119	436,715	37.0	558,741	248,385	44.5	620,378	188,330	30.4
1993	1,244,187	421,560	33.9	571,464	240,839	42.1	672,723	180,721	26.9
1994	1,252,849	390,785	31.2	591,405	233,059	39.4	661,444	157,726	23.8
1995	1,177,758	367,293	31.2	569,960	223,457	39.2	607,798	143,836	23.7
1996	1,196,825	384,167	32.1	593,987	237,474	40.0	602,838	146,693	24.3
1997	1,057,791	357,880	33.8	551,888	228,793	41.5	505,903	129,087	25.5
1998	1,041,352	374,376	36.0	550,763	238,989	43.4	490,589	135,387	27.6
1999	1,065,271	397,335	37.3	578,728	259,910	44.9	486,543	137,425	28.2
2000	1,131,064	436,605	38.6	615,302	284,388	46.2	515,762	152,217	29.5
2001	1,239,245	490,983	39.6	664,710	320,796	48.3	574,535	170,187	29.6
2002	1,357,952	495,681	36.5	703,861	318,828	45.3	654,091	176,853	27.0
Widow(er)s									
1999	38,881	24,933	64.1	29,601	21,291	71.9	9,280	3,642	39.2
2000	38,737	25,781	66.6	29,879	21,997	73.6	8,858	3,784	42.7
2001	38,165	25,501	66.8	29,587	21,804	73.7	8,578	3,697	43.1
2002	37,051	24,042	64.9	28,545	20,519	71.9	8,506	3,523	41.4
Adult children									
1999	56,482	37,731	66.8	41,496	32,475	78.3	14,986	5,256	35.1
2000	58,337	39,560	67.8	42,942	33,946	79.1	15,395	5,614	36.5
2001	56,168	37,396	66.6	40,489	31,750	78.4	15,679	5,646	36.0
2002	58,086	36,002	62.0	39,877	30,115	75.5	18,209	5,887	32.3

SOURCE: Social Security Administration, Disability Research file, 100 percent data.

NOTES: Data are current through June 2003.

Because a number of applications remain pending for more recent years, the allowance rate will change over time.

Applications with a medical decision may be pending a final nonmedical decision or be subsequently denied for nonmedical reasons.

Data for 1992–1998 are available for disabled workers only.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income.

a. Rate determined by dividing medical allowances by all medical decisions for that year.

b. Rate for the Social Security portion only.

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Table 54.
Medical decisions at the reconsideration level, by year of application and program, 1992–2002

Year	All decisions			Decisions on applications for Social Security only			Decisions on applications for both Social Security and SSI		
	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^a (percent)	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^a (percent)	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^{a,b} (percent)
All disabled beneficiaries									
1999	398,161	61,143	15.4	210,334	34,724	16.5	187,827	26,419	14.1
2000	408,455	58,590	14.3	215,372	33,233	15.4	193,083	25,357	13.1
2001	428,465	56,827	13.3	218,180	31,934	14.6	210,285	24,893	11.8
2002	442,376	46,336	10.5	221,795	26,004	11.7	220,581	20,332	9.2
Workers									
1992	419,798	53,881	12.8	190,594	25,352	13.3	229,204	28,529	12.4
1993	469,151	58,275	12.4	206,606	27,306	13.2	262,545	30,969	11.8
1994	489,728	62,757	12.8	226,010	31,468	13.9	263,718	31,289	11.9
1995	458,033	60,584	13.2	218,947	31,563	14.4	239,086	29,021	12.1
1996	464,577	65,466	14.1	226,328	33,596	14.8	238,249	31,870	13.4
1997	403,204	59,978	14.9	206,127	33,373	16.2	197,077	26,605	13.5
1998	384,966	61,742	16.0	199,261	34,043	17.1	185,705	27,699	14.9
1999	385,386	57,808	15.0	203,673	33,192	16.3	181,713	24,616	13.5
2000	396,960	55,762	14.0	209,075	31,946	15.3	187,885	23,816	12.7
2001	417,542	54,564	13.1	212,257	30,832	14.5	205,285	23,732	11.6
2002	432,347	44,920	10.4	216,420	25,305	11.7	215,927	19,615	9.1
Widow(er)s									
1999	7,108	1,983	27.9	4,108	917	22.3	3,000	1,066	35.5
2000	6,353	1,574	24.8	3,854	738	19.1	2,499	836	33.5
2001	6,063	1,386	22.9	3,753	706	18.8	2,310	680	29.4
2002	5,354	809	15.1	3,364	430	12.8	1,990	379	19.0
Adult children									
1999	5,667	1,352	23.9	2,553	615	24.1	3,114	737	23.7
2000	5,142	1,254	24.4	2,443	549	22.5	2,699	705	26.1
2001	4,860	877	18.0	2,170	396	18.2	2,690	481	17.9
2002	4,675	607	13.0	2,011	269	13.4	2,664	338	12.7

SOURCE: Social Security Administration, Disability Research file, 100 percent data.

NOTES: Data are current through June 2003.

Because a number of applications remain pending for more recent years, the allowance rate will change over time.

Applications with a medical decision may be pending a final nonmedical decision or be subsequently denied for nonmedical reasons.

A revised process was introduced on October 1, 1999, in 10 states, under which initial denials could be appealed directly to the hearing level without a reconsideration.

Data for 1992–1998 are available for disabled workers only.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income.

a. Rate determined by dividing medical allowances by all medical decisions for that year.

b. Rate for the Social Security portion only.

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Outcomes of Applications for Disability Benefits

Table 55.
Medical decisions at the hearing level or above, by year of application and program, 1992–2002

Year	All decisions			Decisions on applications for Social Security only			Decisions on applications for both Social Security and SSI		
	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^a (percent)	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^a (percent)	Total	Allowances	Allowance rate ^{a,b} (percent)
All disabled beneficiaries									
1999	255,641	186,313	72.9	140,324	110,634	78.8	115,317	75,679	65.6
2000	265,565	195,070	73.5	145,579	115,556	79.4	119,986	79,514	66.3
2001	223,905	168,233	75.1	122,392	99,241	81.1	101,513	68,992	68.0
2002	83,090	64,691	77.9	47,843	40,115	83.8	35,247	24,576	69.7
Workers									
1992	275,863	201,359	73.0	131,624	105,371	80.1	144,239	95,988	66.5
1993	310,655	217,816	70.1	143,997	112,593	78.2	166,658	105,223	63.1
1994	323,604	220,553	68.2	156,455	119,309	76.3	167,149	101,244	60.6
1995	301,914	202,486	67.1	150,879	113,669	75.3	151,035	88,817	58.8
1996	300,075	204,158	68.0	155,388	116,039	74.7	144,687	88,119	60.9
1997	261,773	185,011	70.7	138,645	106,966	77.2	123,128	78,045	63.4
1998	246,681	177,595	72.0	132,670	104,007	78.4	114,011	73,588	64.5
1999	251,642	183,532	72.9	137,286	108,463	79.0	114,356	75,069	65.6
2000	261,502	192,245	73.5	142,494	113,350	79.5	119,008	78,895	66.3
2001	220,783	165,985	75.2	119,958	97,451	81.2	100,825	68,534	68.0
2002	81,966	63,843	77.9	46,917	39,402	84.0	35,049	24,441	69.7
Widow(er)s									
1999	2,894	2,215	76.5	2,234	1,733	77.6	660	482	73.0
2000	2,919	2,257	77.3	2,252	1,765	78.4	667	492	73.8
2001	2,245	1,799	80.1	1,795	1,447	80.6	450	352	78.2
2002	852	711	83.5	724	604	83.4	128	107	83.6
Adult children									
1999	1,105	566	51.2	804	438	54.5	301	128	42.5
2000	1,144	568	49.7	833	441	52.9	311	127	40.8
2001	877	449	51.2	639	343	53.7	238	106	44.5
2002	272	137	50.4	202	109	54.0	70	28	40.0

SOURCE: Social Security Administration, Disability Research file, 100 percent data.

NOTES: Data are current through September 2003.

Because a number of applications remain pending for more recent years, the allowance rate will change over time.

Applications with a medical decision may be pending a final nonmedical decision or be subsequently denied for nonmedical reasons.

A revised process was introduced on October 1, 1999, in 10 states, under which initial denials could be appealed directly to the hearing level without a reconsideration.

Data for 1992–1998 are available for disabled workers only.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income.

a. Rate determined by dividing medical allowances by all medical decisions for that year.

b. Rate for Social Security portion only.

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Outcomes of Applications for Disability Benefits

Table 56.
Percentage distribution of final medical allowances, by year of application and reason for allowance, 1992–2002

Year	Total		Meets level of severity of listings	Equals level of severity of listings	Medical and vocational factors considered	Other ^a
	Number	Percent				
All disabled beneficiaries						
1999	705,595	100.0	33.1	6.0	27.1	33.8
2000	753,666	100.0	31.6	6.3	29.7	32.4
2001	776,982	100.0	32.2	6.6	32.4	28.8
2002	664,582	100.0	37.3	7.0	38.9	16.8
Workers						
1992	689,111	100.0	34.3	11.1	24.3	30.3
1993	695,007	100.0	34.3	8.7	23.6	33.4
1994	671,699	100.0	34.5	6.9	25.6	32.9
1995	628,127	100.0	34.5	6.8	26.9	31.9
1996	651,675	100.0	34.2	7.0	27.4	31.4
1997	601,010	100.0	35.0	7.6	26.5	30.9
1998	611,668	100.0	35.6	6.6	27.0	30.8
1999	636,887	100.0	33.8	6.3	28.4	31.5
2000	682,739	100.0	32.3	6.6	31.2	29.9
2001	709,629	100.0	32.9	6.9	33.9	26.3
2002	602,321	100.0	38.4	7.4	41.1	13.1
Widow(er)s						
1999	29,094	100.0	14.9	2.5	24.6	58.0
2000	29,583	100.0	12.8	2.5	26.4	58.3
2001	28,667	100.0	12.9	2.7	28.2	56.2
2002	25,546	100.0	13.3	2.4	30.3	54.0
Adult children						
1999	39,614	100.0	35.9	3.2	7.4	53.5
2000	41,344	100.0	35.0	3.1	7.3	54.7
2001	38,686	100.0	34.3	3.1	8.3	54.3
2002	36,715	100.0	36.2	3.3	8.5	52.1

SOURCE: Social Security Administration, Disability Research file, 100 percent data.

NOTES: Data for the initial and reconsideration levels are current through June 2003. Data for the hearing level or above are current through September 2003.

Because a number of applications remain pending for more recent years, the numbers and percentages will change over time.

Applications with a medical decision may be pending a final nonmedical decision or be subsequently denied for nonmedical reasons.

Data include decisions for Social Security–only applications and applications for both Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI); they do not include SSI-only claims.

Data for 1992–1998 are available for disabled workers only.

a. Includes applications for which the disability was previously established and those for which the basis for the determination is not available. The majority of applications for which the basis of determination is not available are cases allowed at or above the hearing level.

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Outcomes of Applications for Disability Benefits

Table 57.
Percentage distribution of final medical denials, by year of application and reason for denial, 1992–2002

Year	Total		Impairment did not or is not expected to last 12 months	Impairment is not severe	Able to do usual past work	Able to do other type of work	Other ^a
	Number	Percent					
All disabled beneficiaries							
1999	445,078	100.0	10.3	17.8	28.2	30.8	12.9
2000	450,372	100.0	10.2	17.2	28.2	30.2	14.2
2001	472,396	100.0	9.5	16.7	27.8	30.5	15.4
2002	513,958	100.0	9.1	16.9	27.9	30.2	16.0
Workers							
1992	487,164	100.0	10.7	22.9	28.4	29.6	8.4
1993	546,532	100.0	10.4	22.7	27.6	29.8	9.5
1994	578,753	100.0	10.2	21.5	25.9	28.8	13.6
1995	547,395	100.0	10.6	20.8	25.3	29.4	13.8
1996	536,883	100.0	10.3	19.7	24.9	30.8	14.2
1997	449,439	100.0	10.7	18.6	25.8	30.6	14.2
1998	422,887	100.0	10.8	18.3	27.8	30.8	12.3
1999	418,628	100.0	10.7	17.4	29.3	30.0	12.6
2000	424,624	100.0	10.6	16.8	29.2	29.5	14.0
2001	446,591	100.0	9.9	16.3	28.8	29.8	15.2
2002	485,105	100.0	9.4	16.5	28.9	29.4	15.8
Widow(er)s							
1999	9,667	100.0	5.6	29.1	31.8	22.6	10.8
2000	8,940	100.0	5.3	29.0	31.3	22.4	12.1
2001	8,840	100.0	4.8	27.0	31.3	23.5	13.5
2002	9,169	100.0	5.0	24.8	32.7	24.6	12.9
Adult children							
1999	16,783	100.0	3.1	22.7	0.7	53.3	20.2
2000	16,808	100.0	2.8	22.8	0.7	51.9	21.7
2001	16,965	100.0	2.6	21.2	1.0	53.0	22.2
2002	19,684	100.0	2.5	21.2	0.9	53.3	22.1

SOURCE: Social Security Administration, Disability Research file, 100 percent data.

NOTES: Data for the initial and reconsideration levels are current through June 2003. Data for the hearing level or above are current through September 2003.

Because a number of applications remain pending for more recent years, the numbers and percentages will change over time.

Applications with a medical decision may be pending a final nonmedical decision or be subsequently denied for nonmedical reasons.

Data include decisions for Social Security–only applications and applications for both Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI); they do not include SSI-only claims.

Data for 1992–1998 are available for disabled workers only.

a. Applicant has an impairment resulting from drug addiction or alcoholism, provided insufficient medical evidence, failed to cooperate, failed to follow prescribed treatment, did not want to continue development of the claim, or returned to substantial work before disability could be established. Also includes cases denied at or above the hearing level for which the basis of determination is not available.

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