
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 53 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 54–56 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 adjudicative, 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.

The next section includes one table that shows the reason for medical allowance and one that shows the reason for medical denial (Tables 57 and 58). 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

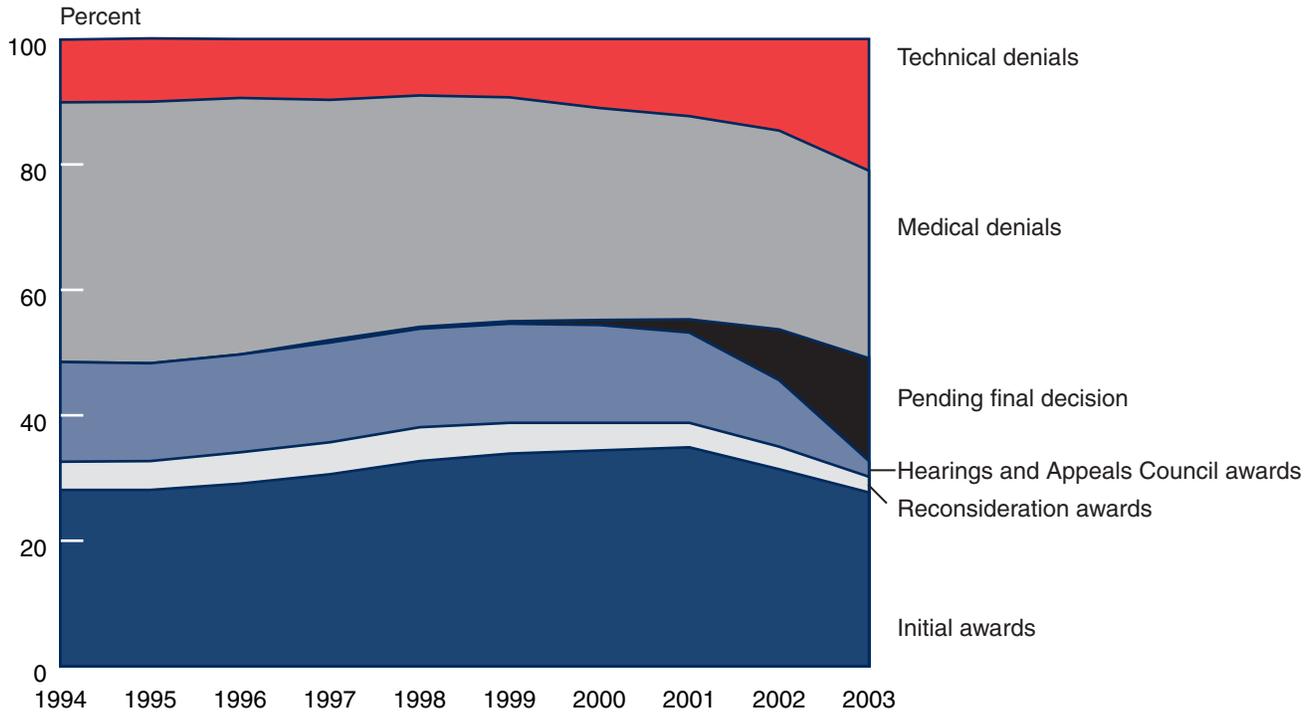
- has a listed impairment,
- has a severe impairment that is equal to a listed impairment,
- has a severe impairment when medical and vocational factors are considered, or
- had previously established entitlement to a disability benefit.

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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Chart 10.
Final outcome of disabled-worker applications, 1994–2003

The final award rate for disabled-worker applicants has varied over time, averaging more than 49 percent for claims filed from 1994 through 2003. The percentage of applicants awarded benefits at the initial claims level averaged 31 percent over the same period and ranged from a high of about 35 percent to a low of 28 percent. The percentage of applicants awarded at the reconsideration and hearing levels are relatively constant, averaging 4 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Denied disability claims have averaged about 48 percent.



SOURCE: Tables 53–58.

NOTES: Awards are calculated as medical allowances minus subsequent technical denials. Technical denials include both nonmedical decision technical denials and medical decisions that were subsequently denied for technical reasons.

The proportion of claims awarded at each level of the process is likely to change 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 is likely to result in a decrease in the overall proportion of claims awarded at this step.

Outcomes of Applications for Disability Benefits

Table 53.
Outcomes at all adjudicative levels, by year of application, 1992–2003

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	4,786	104,330	442,841	4,071	707,169	1,858	56.1	61.4
2000	1,364,396	10,251	136,072	452,851	3,842	759,440	1,940	56.1	62.6
2001	1,513,536	30,426	170,380	483,392	3,618	823,786	1,934	55.5	63.0
2002	1,706,759	132,080	230,895	537,073	4,239	800,338	2,134	50.8	59.8
2003	1,903,272	300,410	374,430	570,274	4,892	651,002	2,264	40.6	53.3
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	130,240	573,158	5,506	671,791	2,397	48.6	53.9
1995	1,301,472	0	123,712	542,183	5,049	628,292	2,236	48.3	53.6
1996	1,313,818	0	116,990	537,721	5,012	651,979	2,116	49.6	54.7
1997	1,164,680	4,621	106,822	445,664	4,216	601,498	1,859	51.9	57.4
1998	1,138,101	3,210	96,677	419,503	4,214	612,452	2,045	54.0	59.3
1999	1,167,664	4,675	102,306	416,422	4,023	638,452	1,786	54.9	60.5
2000	1,265,214	10,074	133,967	427,066	3,807	688,427	1,873	54.8	61.7
2001	1,414,598	29,973	168,094	457,809	3,575	753,268	1,879	54.4	62.2
2002	1,602,789	130,257	228,297	507,742	4,180	730,230	2,083	49.6	59.0
2003	1,802,488	296,376	371,475	538,366	4,835	589,254	2,182	39.1	52.2
Widow(er)s									
1999	40,055	69	1,173	9,660	17	29,099	37	72.8	75.1
2000	39,996	99	1,257	8,967	11	29,633	29	74.3	76.8
2001	40,238	240	1,344	8,611	13	30,011	19	75.0	77.7
2002	40,580	1,036	1,535	9,068	20	28,902	19	73.1	76.1
2003	38,536	2,302	1,647	9,818	29	24,691	49	68.1	71.6

(Continued)

Outcomes of Applications for Disability Benefits

Table 53.
Outcomes at all adjudicative levels, by year of application, 1992–2003—Continued

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		
Adult children									
1999	57,336	42	851	16,759	31	39,618	35	69.1	70.3
2000	59,186	78	848	16,818	24	41,380	38	70.0	71.1
2001	58,700	213	942	16,972	30	40,507	36	69.3	70.5
2002	63,390	787	1,063	20,263	39	41,206	32	65.8	67.0
2003	62,248	1,732	1,308	22,090	28	37,057	33	61.2	62.7

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

NOTES: Data for the initial and reconsideration levels are current through June 2004. Data for the hearing level or above are current through August 2004.

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 from 1992 to 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 54.
Medical decisions at the initial adjudicative level, by year of application and program, 1992–2003

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	1,160,649	459,999	39.6	649,840	313,676	48.3	510,809	146,323	28.6
2000	1,228,182	501,946	40.9	688,167	340,331	49.5	540,015	161,615	29.9
2001	1,342,817	560,106	41.7	742,775	379,872	51.1	600,042	180,234	30.0
2002	1,474,682	570,428	38.7	786,584	380,849	48.4	688,098	189,579	27.6
2003	1,525,515	561,375	36.8	775,685	364,875	47.0	749,830	196,500	26.2
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	1,252,852	390,785	31.2	591,408	233,059	39.4	661,444	157,726	23.8
1995	1,177,760	367,293	31.2	569,962	223,457	39.2	607,798	143,836	23.7
1996	1,196,828	384,167	32.1	593,990	237,474	40.0	602,838	146,693	24.3
1997	1,057,794	357,880	33.8	551,891	228,793	41.5	505,903	129,087	25.5
1998	1,041,362	374,376	36.0	550,773	238,989	43.4	490,589	135,387	27.6
1999	1,065,286	397,335	37.3	578,743	259,910	44.9	486,543	137,425	28.2
2000	1,131,108	436,605	38.6	615,346	284,388	46.2	515,762	152,217	29.5
2001	1,246,173	494,907	39.7	670,481	324,189	48.4	575,692	170,718	29.7
2002	1,373,343	504,712	36.8	712,627	324,909	45.6	660,716	179,803	27.2
2003	1,427,746	501,570	35.1	708,132	314,903	44.5	719,614	186,667	25.9
Widow(er)s									
1999	38,881	24,933	64.1	29,601	8,310	28.1	9,280	3,642	39.2
2000	38,737	25,781	66.6	29,879	7,882	26.4	8,858	3,784	42.7
2001	38,894	26,242	67.5	30,284	7,826	25.8	8,610	3,784	43.9
2002	39,039	25,886	66.3	30,356	8,164	26.9	8,687	3,696	42.5
2003	36,878	23,449	63.6	27,702	7,779	28.1	9,184	3,530	38.4
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	57,750	38,957	67.5	42,010	33,225	79.1	15,740	5,732	36.4
2002	62,300	39,830	63.9	43,605	33,750	77.4	18,695	6,080	32.5
2003	60,891	36,356	59.7	39,859	30,053	75.4	21,032	6,303	30.0

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

NOTES: Data are current through June 2004.

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 from 1992 to 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 55.
Medical decisions at the reconsideration level, by year of application and program, 1992–2003

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	398,176	61,143	15.4	210,349	34,724	16.5	187,827	26,419	14.1
2000	408,499	58,590	14.3	215,416	33,233	15.4	193,083	25,357	13.1
2001	435,072	58,417	13.4	222,192	32,590	14.7	212,880	25,827	12.1
2002	495,402	59,551	12.0	245,647	32,742	13.3	249,755	26,809	10.7
2003	454,458	45,945	10.1	218,012	25,115	11.5	236,446	20,830	8.8
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	489,731	62,757	12.8	226,013	31,468	13.9	263,718	31,289	11.9
1995	458,035	60,584	13.2	218,949	31,563	14.4	239,086	29,021	12.1
1996	464,580	65,466	14.1	226,331	33,596	14.8	238,249	31,870	13.4
1997	403,207	59,978	14.9	206,130	33,373	16.2	197,077	26,605	13.5
1998	384,976	61,742	16.0	199,271	34,043	17.1	185,705	27,699	14.9
1999	385,401	57,808	15.0	203,688	33,192	16.3	181,713	24,616	13.5
2000	397,004	55,762	14.0	209,119	31,946	15.3	187,885	23,816	12.7
2001	423,898	55,822	13.2	216,096	31,420	14.5	207,802	24,402	11.7
2002	483,286	57,351	11.9	239,310	31,746	13.3	243,976	25,605	10.5
2003	444,380	44,534	10.0	213,302	24,460	11.5	231,078	20,074	8.7
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	6,192	1,599	25.8	3,859	741	19.2	2,333	858	36.8
2002	6,248	1,250	20.0	3,883	613	15.8	2,365	637	26.9
2003	5,219	770	14.8	2,982	420	14.1	2,237	350	15.6
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	4,982	996	20.0	2,237	429	19.2	2,745	567	20.7
2002	5,868	950	16.2	2,454	383	15.6	3,414	567	16.6
2003	4,859	641	13.2	1,728	235	13.6	3,131	406	13.0

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

NOTES: Data are current through June 2004.

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 from 1992 to 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 56.
Medical decisions at the hearing level or above, by year of application and program, 1992–2003

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	259,057	187,885	72.5	141,940	111,443	78.5	117,117	76,442	65.3
2000	277,685	200,843	72.3	151,007	118,345	78.4	126,678	82,498	65.1
2001	281,835	207,197	73.5	150,307	120,145	79.9	131,528	87,052	66.2
2002	228,652	172,493	75.4	123,185	100,985	82.0	105,467	71,508	67.8
2003	58,130	45,946	79.0	33,836	28,878	85.3	24,294	17,068	70.3
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	323,607	220,645	68.2	156,458	119,338	76.3	167,149	101,307	60.6
1995	301,916	202,651	67.1	150,881	113,746	75.4	151,035	88,905	58.9
1996	306,243	204,462	66.8	157,788	116,190	73.6	148,455	88,272	59.5
1997	262,704	185,499	70.6	139,052	107,191	77.1	123,652	78,308	63.3
1998	248,298	178,379	71.8	133,420	104,389	78.2	114,878	73,990	64.4
1999	255,032	185,095	72.6	138,883	109,266	78.7	116,149	75,829	65.3
2000	273,463	197,932	72.4	147,801	116,072	78.5	125,662	81,860	65.1
2001	277,899	204,418	73.6	147,270	117,944	80.1	130,629	86,474	66.2
2002	225,526	170,250	75.5	120,747	99,181	82.1	104,779	71,069	67.8
2003	57,348	45,332	79.0	33,234	28,400	85.5	24,114	16,932	70.2
Widow(er)s									
1999	2,909	2,220	76.3	2,244	1,736	77.4	665	484	72.8
2000	3,007	2,307	76.7	2,321	1,805	77.8	686	502	73.2
2001	2,762	2,189	79.3	2,195	1,756	80.0	567	433	76.4
2002	2,217	1,785	80.5	1,788	1,457	81.5	429	328	76.5
2003	610	521	85.4	477	407	85.3	133	114	85.7
Adult children									
1999	1,116	570	51.1	813	441	54.2	303	129	42.6
2000	1,215	604	49.7	885	468	52.9	330	136	41.2
2001	1,174	590	50.3	842	445	52.9	332	145	43.7
2002	909	458	50.4	650	347	53.4	259	111	42.9
2003	172	93	54.1	125	71	56.8	47	22	46.8

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

NOTES: Data are current through August 2004.

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 from 1992 to 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 57.
Percentage distribution of final medical allowances, by year of application and reason for allowance, 1992–2003

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	707,169	100.0	33.1	5.9	27.0	34.0
2000	759,440	100.0	31.4	6.2	29.5	32.9
2001	823,786	100.0	30.6	6.2	30.7	32.5
2002	800,338	100.0	31.8	6.0	33.7	28.5
2003	651,002	100.0	37.4	6.9	42.1	13.6
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	671,791	100.0	34.5	6.9	25.6	32.9
1995	628,292	100.0	34.5	6.7	26.8	31.9
1996	651,979	100.0	34.2	7.0	27.4	31.4
1997	601,498	100.0	35.0	7.6	26.4	31.0
1998	612,452	100.0	35.5	6.6	27.0	30.9
1999	638,452	100.0	33.7	6.3	28.4	31.7
2000	688,427	100.0	32.0	6.6	30.9	30.5
2001	753,268	100.0	31.2	6.5	32.1	30.2
2002	730,230	100.0	32.5	6.3	35.3	25.9
2003	589,254	100.0	38.5	7.4	44.7	9.4
Widow(er)s						
1999	29,099	100.0	14.9	2.5	24.6	58.0
2000	29,633	100.0	12.8	2.5	26.3	58.3
2001	30,011	100.0	12.3	2.6	27.1	57.9
2002	28,902	100.0	12.1	2.2	28.0	57.8
2003	24,691	100.0	12.5	2.5	30.1	54.8
Adult children						
1999	39,618	100.0	35.9	3.2	7.4	53.5
2000	41,380	100.0	35.0	3.1	7.3	54.7
2001	40,507	100.0	33.0	3.0	8.0	55.9
2002	41,206	100.0	33.2	3.0	8.0	55.8
2003	37,057	100.0	35.8	3.1	9.1	52.0

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

NOTES: Data for the initial and reconsideration levels are current through June 2004. Data for the hearing level or above are current through August 2004.

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 from 1992 to 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 58.

Percentage distribution of final medical denials, by year of application and reason for denial, 1992–2003

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	446,912	100.0	10.3	17.8	28.3	30.8	12.8
2000	456,693	100.0	10.1	17.2	28.2	30.4	14.1
2001	487,010	100.0	9.4	16.8	27.9	30.8	15.1
2002	541,312	100.0	8.8	17.2	27.9	30.6	15.5
2003	575,166	100.0	8.0	17.0	28.4	31.1	15.5
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	578,664	100.0	10.2	21.5	25.9	28.8	13.6
1995	547,232	100.0	10.6	20.8	25.4	29.4	13.8
1996	542,733	100.0	10.2	19.6	24.7	30.6	14.8
1997	449,880	100.0	10.7	18.6	25.8	30.6	14.2
1998	423,717	100.0	10.8	18.3	27.8	30.8	12.3
1999	420,445	100.0	10.7	17.4	29.3	30.1	12.6
2000	430,873	100.0	10.5	16.7	29.3	29.7	13.8
2001	461,384	100.0	9.7	16.4	28.9	30.2	14.9
2002	511,922	100.0	9.1	16.8	28.9	29.8	15.3
2003	543,201	100.0	8.3	16.7	29.4	30.4	15.3
Widow(er)s							
1999	9,677	100.0	5.6	29.1	31.8	22.7	10.8
2000	8,978	100.0	5.3	29.0	31.4	22.4	12.1
2001	8,624	100.0	4.7	27.6	31.1	22.8	13.7
2002	9,088	100.0	4.8	25.7	32.4	24.0	13.0
2003	9,847	100.0	4.6	24.7	33.4	24.2	13.0
Adult children							
1999	16,790	100.0	3.1	22.7	0.7	53.3	20.2
2000	16,842	100.0	2.9	22.9	0.7	51.9	21.7
2001	17,002	100.0	2.6	21.3	0.9	52.8	22.4
2002	20,302	100.0	2.3	21.4	0.8	53.6	21.8
2003	22,118	100.0	2.2	21.5	0.7	53.6	22.0

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

NOTES: Data for the initial and reconsideration levels are current through June 2004. Data for the hearing level or above are current through August 2004.

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 from 1992 to 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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