

The Environmental Status Scale (ESS)

Overview: The Environmental Status Scale (ESS) can be used to quickly evaluate a patient for handicap both initially and for monitoring over time. It was derived from a measure of socio-economic status.

Parameters:

- (1) actual work status
- (2) financial and economic status
- (3) personal residence or home
- (4) personal assistance required
- (5) transportation
- (6) community services
- (7) social activity

Parameter	Finding	Points
actual work status	normal (job housework school) or retired	0
	works full time but in a less demanding position	1
	works more than half time at job home or school	2
	works between 25% and 50%	3
	works less than 25%	4
	unemployed; unable to do work	5
financial/economic status	no disease-related financial problems	0
	family maintains usual financial standard without external support despite some financial disadvantages	1
	family maintains usual financial standard with the aid of some external financial support	2
	family maintains usual financial standard by receiving basic disability pension as defined in location of residence	3
	family maintains usual financial standard only because receiving all available financial assistance	4
	family unable to maintain usual financial standard despite receipt of all available	5

	financial assistance	
personal residence/home	no change necessary	0
	minor modification necessary	1
	moderate modification necessary	2
	major structural alteration or addition necessary	3
	must move to satisfactory personal home	4
	must live in a facility for dependent care because unable to continue any personal residence (institutionalized)	5
personal assistance required	none	0
	minor help; relatives involved but personal independence is maintained	1
	requires assistance for activities of daily living up to 1 hour per day from relatives or others in the home	2
	requires assistance for activities of daily living up to 3 hours per day from relatives or others in the home	3
	requires more than 3 hours of personal assistance per day but is able to live at home and does not need a constant attendant	4
	requires a constant attendant or care in an institution (cannot be left alone for more than short periods)	5
transportation	uses public transportation with no problems or drives	0
	uses all forms of transport available despite minor difficulties; drives with minor difficulty	1
	uses some public transport despite difficulties or needs hand controls to drive	2
	cannot use public transport but can use private transport; cannot drive but can be driven by others	3
	requires community transport in a wheelchair	4
	requires ambulance	5
community service	none required	0

	requires service only once per month or less frequently	1
	requires not more than 1 hour per week	2
	requires not more than average of 1 hour per day	3
	requires 1-4 hours per day	4
	requires more than 4 hours per day	5
	institutionalized	5
social activity	socially active as before with no changes in the usual pattern of social activity and no difficulty maintaining this pattern	0
	maintains usual patterns of social activity despite some difficulties	1
	some restrictions on social activity such as change in type or frequency of some activities or increased dependence on others	2
	significant restrictions on social activity largely dependent on actions of others but still able to initiate some activity	3
	socially inactive except for the initiative of others	4
	no social activity does not see friends or family social contact is limited to that provided by community service providers (visiting nurse etc.)	5

where:

- In work status unemployment by choice would have a difference meaning than disabled for work. Unemployed by choice might be better viewed as some form of early retirement.

ESS score = SUM(points for all 7 parameters)

Interpretation:

- minimum score: 0
- maximum score: 35
- The higher the score the greater the handicap.

Limitations:

- Stewart et al indicate that the ESS (1) has limited validity (2) uses a misleading scoring system in some sections (3) mixes handicap and disability issues and (4) fails to give sufficient weight to the individual nature of handicap to varying roles and lifestyles.
- While the score can indicate that some change has occurred it does not reflect the degree of change.
- Acceptable measures: actual work status social activity.
- Requires some work: transportation community services
- Considerable problems: financial/economic status personal residence personal assistance.

References:

Grainger CV Cotter AC et al. Functional assessment of scales: a study of persons with multiple sclerosis. Arch Phys Med Rehabil. 1990; 71: 870-875.

Stewart G Kidd D Thompson AJ. The assessment of handicap: an evaluation of the Environmental Status Scale. Disability Rehabilitation. 1995; 17: 312-316 (Appendix page 316).