



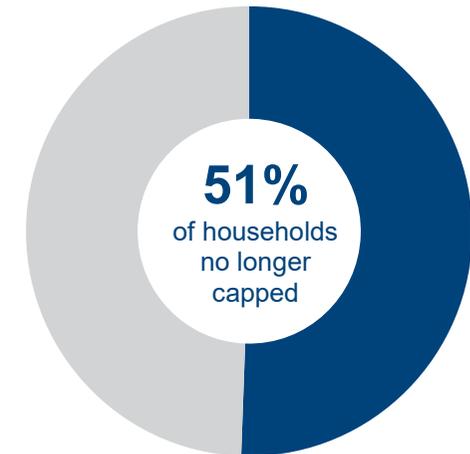
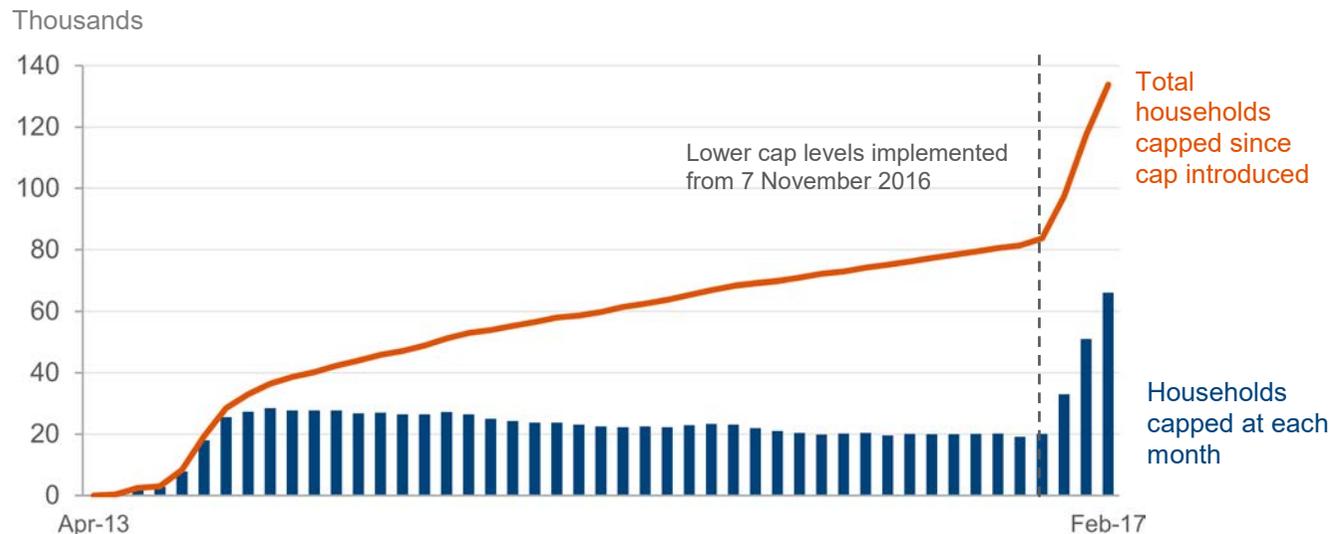
There is a limit on the total amount of benefit that most people aged 16 to 64 can get. This is called the benefit cap.

Main stories

- 134,000 households had their benefits capped between 15 April 2013, when the benefit cap was introduced, and February 2017.
- The increase in the number of capped households this quarter is due to the implementation of lower cap levels from 7 November 2016.

66,000 households capped at February 2017
Up by 46,000 on November 2016 as lower cap levels now apply

68,000 households no longer capped at February 2017



* Each Local Authority has a schedule to extract and return their data to DWP over a four week rolling period, which does not necessarily correspond to a calendar month. February 2017 data has typically been extracted between 23 January and 16 February 2017, depending on the Local Authority, and therefore only contains data up to that extraction date. This means that the statistics do not show the number of capped cases on a particular date but over a monthly cycle.

At a glance

Page

Lower cap levels have increased the number of capped households

3

3/4 capped households capped due to new cap levels

4

The distribution of capped households has changed

5

Most capped households include children

6

Capped households claim a range of benefits

7

Half of capped households capped by £50 or less a week

8

43% of households that were capped are in work

9

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Comments? Feedback is welcome

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What you need to know

What is the benefit cap?

The benefit cap is a limit on the total amount of benefit that most people aged 16 to 64 can get.

This report contains official statistics on households that have had their benefits capped from when the cap was introduced, in April 2013, to February 2017.

From 7 November 2016 the [cap levels were lowered, and different cap levels for households inside and outside Greater London were introduced](#).

The cap applies to the combined income from benefits including:

- the main out-of-work benefits (Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, and Employment and Support Allowance except when the Support Component is in payment);
- Housing Benefit;
- Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit;
- other benefits such as Incapacity Benefit and Bereavement Allowance.

For most capped households the benefit cap is applied by reducing the amount of Housing Benefit (HB) they receive, so their total benefits no longer add up to more than the cap level. This report contains official statistics on these households.

The benefit cap can also be applied through [Universal Credit](#) (UC). UC is still being rolled out across the country and for different household groups, meaning that the number of households who may have had their UC capped is estimated to be small. These households are not included in this report.

How is it measured?

The main source of benefit cap data is the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE). This is a monthly electronic scan of claimant level data from Local Authority (LA) computer systems. SHBE includes the weekly amount that the HB of a household has been capped by, which is used to produce this analysis.

Data on households who have (previously) been capped that are no longer capped is linked to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and DWP benefits data to determine why households are no longer capped.

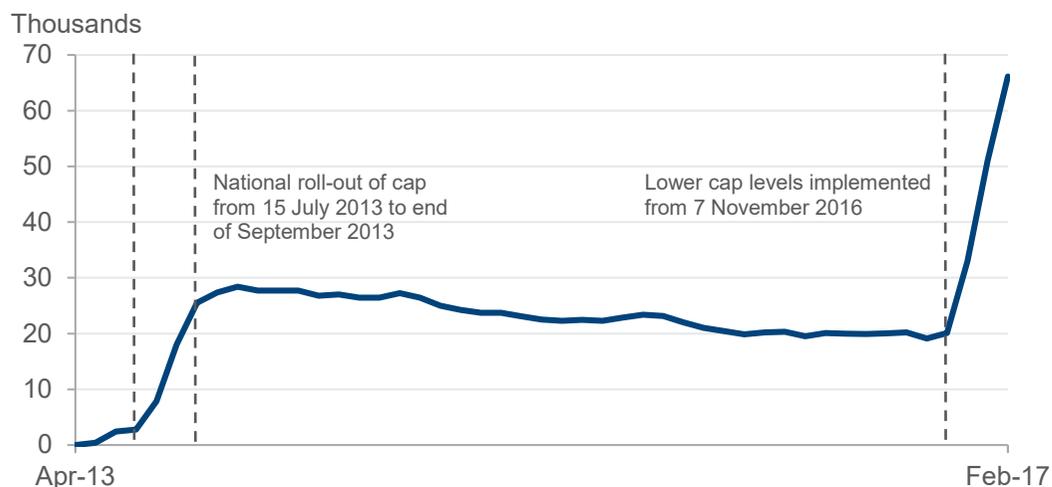
This report contains 4 measures:

- **Point-in-time caseload** counts the number of capped households each month.
- **Cumulative caseload** counts the overall number of households that have been capped from the introduction of the benefit cap to the latest month available.
- **On-flows** are the number of newly capped households each month.
- **Off-flows** are the difference between the two caseload figures, and show the number of previously capped households no longer capped at the latest month available.

How many households are capped

Lower cap levels have increased the number of capped households

Capped households at each month, 15 April 2013 to February 2017



66,000 households had their Housing Benefit (HB) capped at February 2017. This is an increase of 46,000 households on the previous quarter (November 2016).

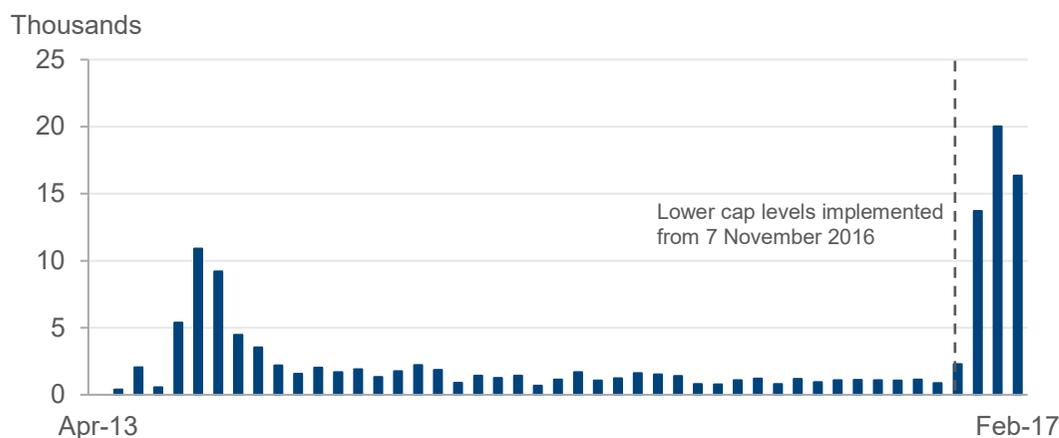
This increase is because of the implementation of lower benefit cap levels, which came into effect from 7 November 2016. It includes households that had their benefits capped for the first time and those previously capped households that came back into scope for the cap. The new cap levels were initially applied to all households that were already capped on 7 November and subsequently rolled-out to newly affected households from 7 November 2016 to 20 January 2017 by Local Authority (LA).*

The benefit cap was introduced from 15 April 2013 in Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey LAs. All other LAs applied the cap from 15 July 2013 to the end of September 2013.

See [Data table 3](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

50,000 households newly capped in the last quarter

Newly capped households at each month, 15 April 2013 to February 2017



50,000 households had their benefits capped for the first time in the last quarter (December 2016 to February 2017).

The new, lower cap levels have increased the number of households in scope for the benefit cap. From 7 November 2016 the lower cap levels were rolled-out to households in-scope for the first time, leading to the highest number of on-flows to the benefit cap in the last quarter (December 2016 to February 2017) since its initial introduction.

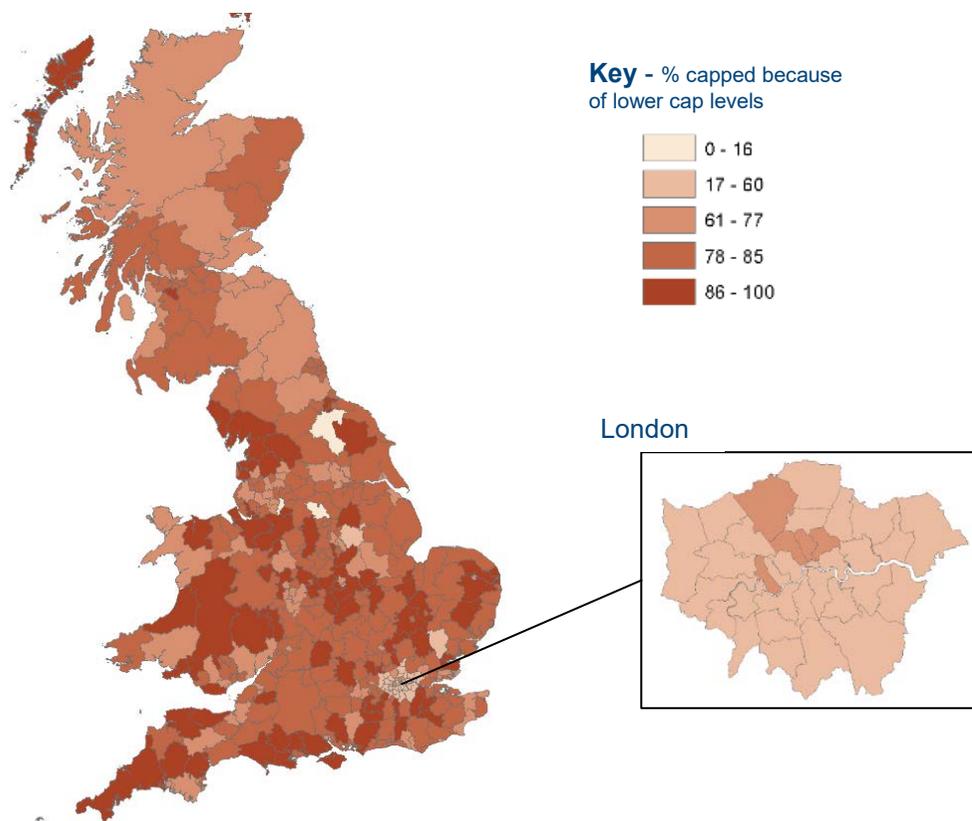
See [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

*Data for a small number of LAs, notably Sheffield, Manchester and Southwark, does not include newly capped households capped due to the implementation of the lower cap levels. This is due to the timings of the roll-out of the new cap levels to newly affected households and of the extraction and return of data to DWP; newly-capped households in these areas were not recorded in time to appear on the February 2017 data extract. This data will be included in the figures released in August 2017, when data to May 2017 will first be published.

The impact of the lower cap levels

Three-quarters of capped households are capped because of the introduction of lower cap levels

Percentage of capped households capped because of introduction of lower cap levels by Local Authority, at February 2017

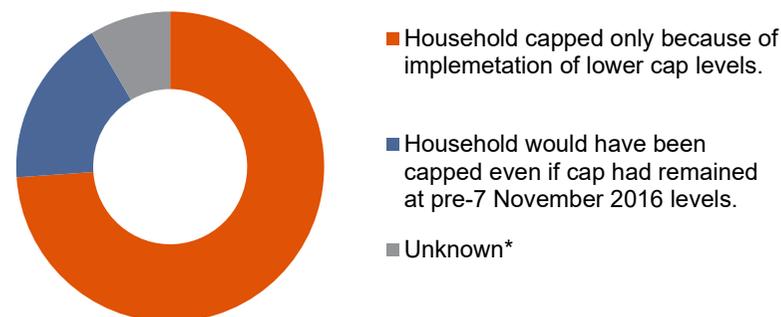


This map shows the percentage of capped households capped only because of the introduction of lower cap levels by LA, as at February 2017. These households would not have been capped if the cap levels had remained at the pre-7 November 2016 levels.

The darker the LA on the map the higher the percentage of capped households capped only because of the new lower cap levels.

At GB level 74% of (49,000) households capped at February 2017 were capped only because of the introduction of the lower cap levels. 18% (12,000) of capped households would have been capped anyway, regardless of the lowering of the cap levels.

Percentage of capped households capped because of introduction of lower cap levels, at February 2017



See [Data table 7](#) for full data by LA and details of the methodology used for this analysis.

More information

The geographical region or LA reflects the initial LA in which the cap was applied to that household.

Data for a small number of LAs, notably Sheffield, Manchester and Southwark, does not include newly capped households capped due to the implementation of the lower cap levels. This is due to the timings of the roll-out of the new cap levels to newly affected households and of the extraction and return of data to DWP; newly-capped households in these areas were not recorded in time to appear on the February 2017 data extract. This data will be included in the figures released in August 2017, when data to May 2017 will first be published.

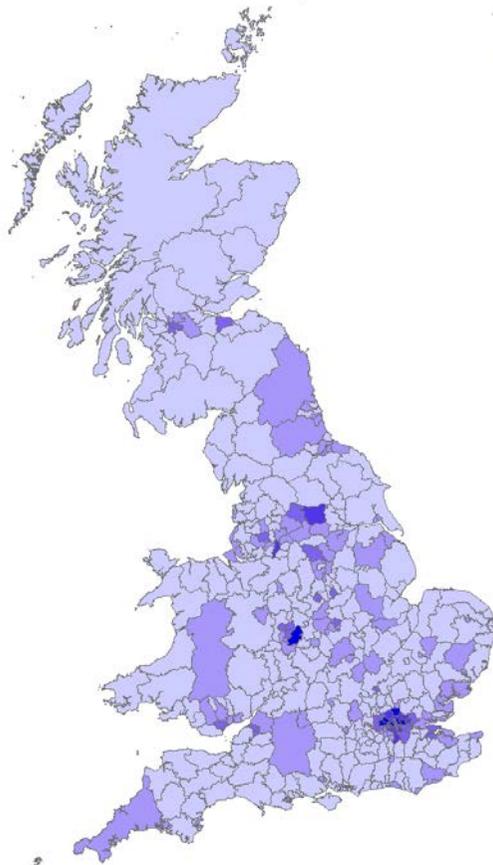
* The amount a household has been capped by at February 2017 is used to determine if a household would have been capped if the cap levels had remained at the pre-7 November 2016 levels or is only capped because of the introduction of the lower cap levels. For some households it is not possible to reliably determine if the household would have been capped under the previous higher levels; these households are shown as 'Unknown'. See [Data Table 7](#) for a full explanation of the methodology used for this analysis.

Where capped households are

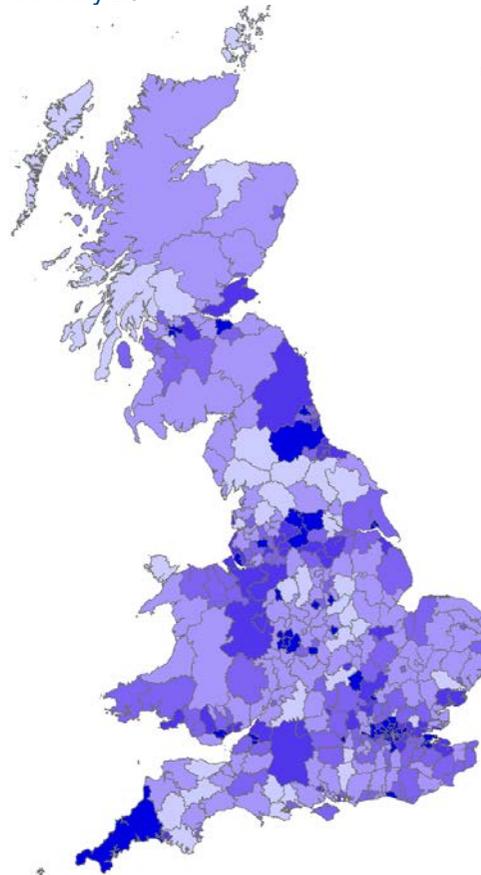
The new cap levels have changed the distribution of capped households

Capped households by Local Authority, at November 2016 and February 2017

November 2016



February 2017



From 7 November 2016 [cap levels were lowered, and different cap levels for households inside and outside Greater London were introduced](#), replacing the single cap level that existed previously.

These maps show the number of capped households by LA at November 2016 and February 2017. The darker areas of the map are LAs with higher numbers of capped households, while the lighter areas are LAs with fewer capped households.

The shading of both maps is based on the same scale. This shows that the number of capped households has increased in the majority of LAs between November 2016 and February 2017 as the new cap levels were rolled out across LAs.

It also shows that in November 2016 LAs with the highest number of capped households were concentrated in Greater London. In February 2017 the distribution of capped households is far more evenly spread across the country. At November 2016, 40% of capped households were in London, compared to 23% at February 2017. This is a reflection of the new cap levels for Greater London being higher than in the rest of GB.

See [Data table 3](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

Where you live

Find more statistics about capped households in your LA on our [interactive map](#), which is updated on a yearly basis and includes data up to May 2016. Key statistics for a LA can be viewed by clicking the relevant area of the map.

For further information on supported browsers, please visit the following website: <http://doc.arcgis.com/en/arcgis-online/reference/browsers.htm>

More information

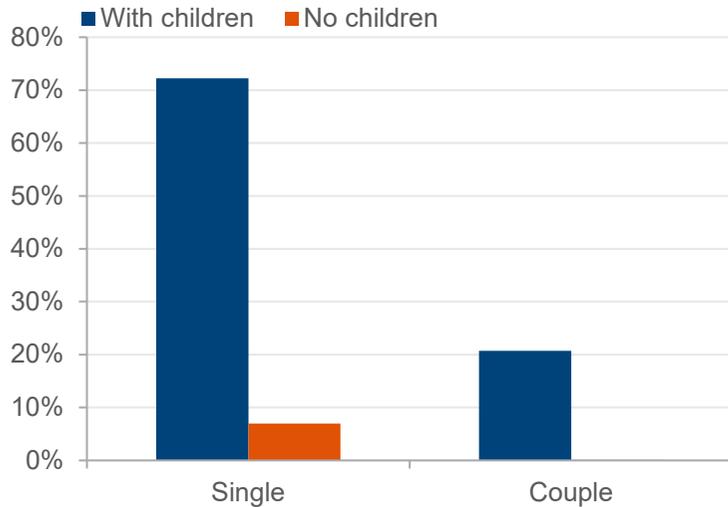
The cumulative caseload is based on the lead claimant. The addition or loss of a partner within a household (or a household moving to a different LA and still subject to the cap) would not be counted as an additional benefit cap case where the lead claimant remains the same and there is no break in claim.

The geographical region or LA reflects the initial LA in which the cap was applied to that household.

The family make-up of capped households

7 in 10 capped households are single-parent families

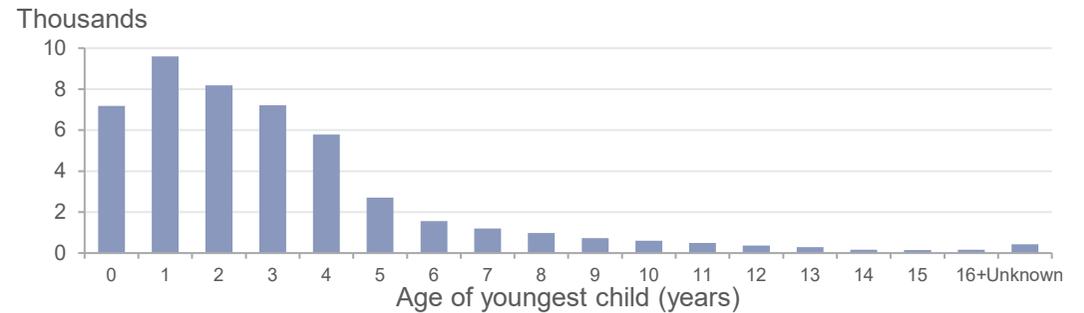
Percentage of capped households by family type, at February 2017



72% (48,000) of capped households are single-parent families.

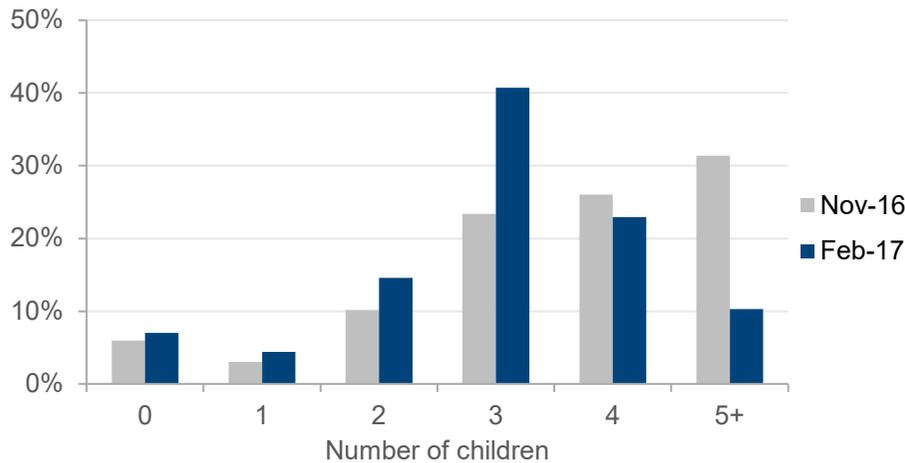
79% (38,000) of single-parent capped households have at least one child aged under 5 years, including 15% (7,200) with a child aged under 1 year at February 2017.

Single-parent capped households by age of youngest child, at February 2017



Most capped households include children

Percentage of capped households by number of children, at November 2016 and February 2017



At February 2017 83% (55,000) of capped households had between 1 and 4 children and 10% (6,800) had 5 or more children.

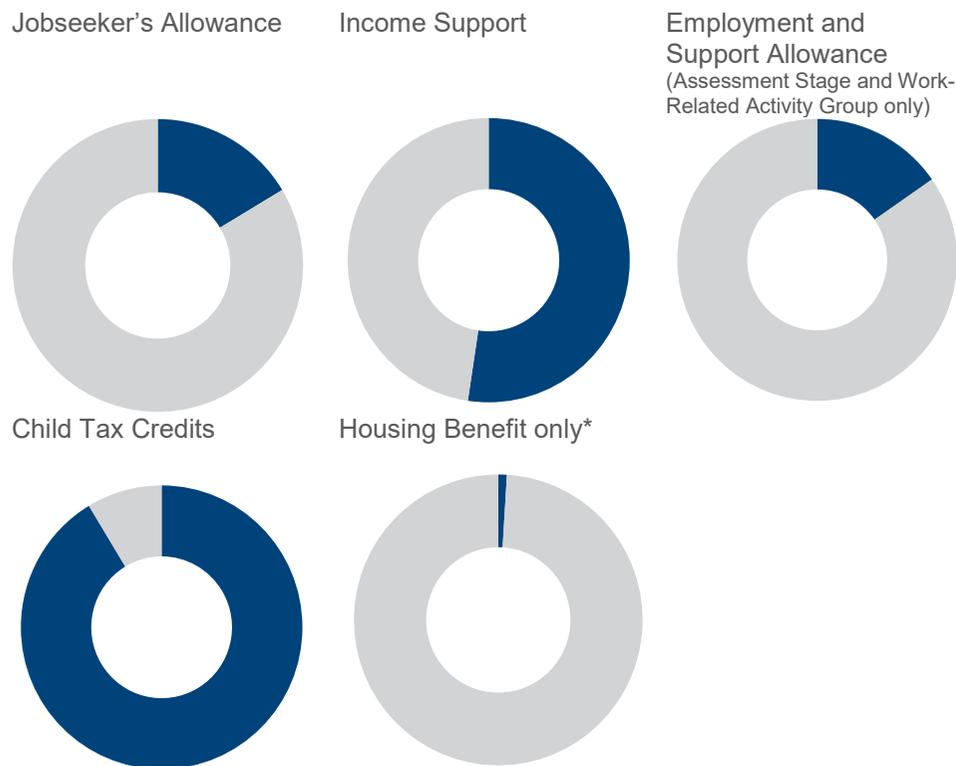
Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits are both in-scope for the benefit cap, so families in receipt of higher amounts of these benefits are more likely to exceed the cap limit and be capped. The chart shows the effects of the new, lower cap levels implemented from 7 November 2016. At November 2016 a household was most likely to be capped if they had 5 or more children (31% of capped households had 5 or more children at November 2016). At February 2017 this has dropped to 3 children (41% of capped households had 3 children at February 2017).

See [Data table 2](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data on the family make-up of capped households. See [Data table 5](#) for full data on the age of youngest child. [Data table 8](#) includes data on the cumulative caseload by family type and age of youngest child.

Benefits claimed by capped households

Capped households claim a range of benefits

Capped households by benefit take-up, at February 2017



At February 2017:

- 16% of capped households were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.
- 52% were claiming Income Support.
- 15% were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (Assessment Stage and Work-Related Activity Group only).
- 91% were claiming Child Tax Credits.
- * 1% were claiming Housing Benefit only from the following benefits in-scope for the cap: Housing Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance, Bereavement Allowance, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

See [Data table 6](#) for full data.

Dark blue sections represent the proportion of capped households in receipt of each benefit.

More information

Capped households can be in receipt of multiple benefits. The benefit cap applies to a household's combined income from a range of working age benefits. This means that a household can be included in multiple categories shown here and therefore percentages do not sum to 100%. More information on benefits that are in-scope for the benefit cap and those that are exempt can be found in the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document.

Households in receipt of Carer's Allowance or Guardian's Allowance became exempt from the benefit cap on 7 November 2016.

Analysis is based on benefit claims by the lead claimant in a household, and where applicable, their partner.

The financial impact of being capped

At February 2017 there has been a slight upward shift in the weekly amounts households are capped by compared to August 2016 (the last quarterly statistics before the new, lower cap levels were applied from 7 November 2016). The percentage of households capped by £50 or less went down from 58% (12,000) at August 2016 to 49% (32,000) at February 2017. This is a reflection of the new, lower cap levels introduced from 7 November 2016; in general households are now capped by more each week to meet the lower cap levels.

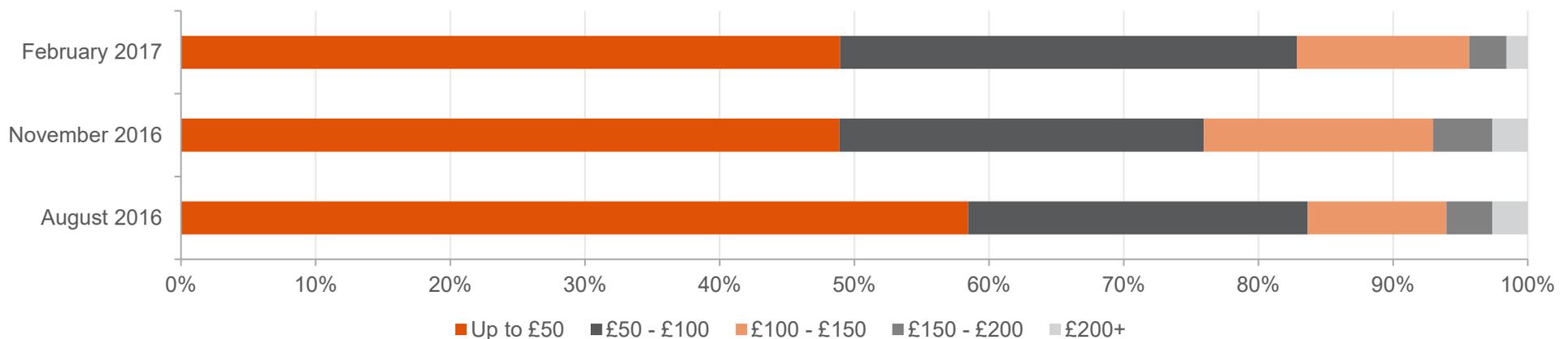
At February 2017 13% (8,500) of capped households were capped by £100 - £150, compared to 17% (3,400) of capped households at November 2016. This is because when the new lower cap levels were rolled out to existing capped households on 7 November 2016 they were capped by more each week. At February 2017 the new cap levels have been applied to newly-affected households capped only because of the lower cap levels. These households are capped by less each week to meet the lower cap levels than households that were already capped, offsetting the increase seen in November 2016.

2% (1,000) of capped households were capped by more than £200 a week at February 2017, including 0.3% (210) capped by more than £300 a week.

See [Data table 2](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

49% of capped households capped by £50 or less a week at February 2017

Capped households by weekly amount capped, at August 2016, November 2016 and February 2017



More information

From 7 November 2016 [cap levels were lowered, and different cap levels for households inside and outside Greater London were introduced](#), replacing the single cap level that existed previously.

Moving off the cap

51% (68,000) of households that have (previously) been capped are no longer capped at February 2017. This is an increase of 4,000 households on the previous quarter (November 2016). Even though the number of households that have moved off the cap has increased since November 2016, the proportion of households that have (previously) been capped but are no longer capped has decreased from 76%. This is due to the fact that the overall cumulative caseload has increased significantly from November 2016, with the roll-out of the new, lower cap levels to newly affected households from 7 November 2016.

Of the 68,000 households no longer capped at February 2017, 29,000 are exempt with an open Working Tax Credit (WTC) claim, indicating that they have moved into work. This is 43% of those no longer capped.

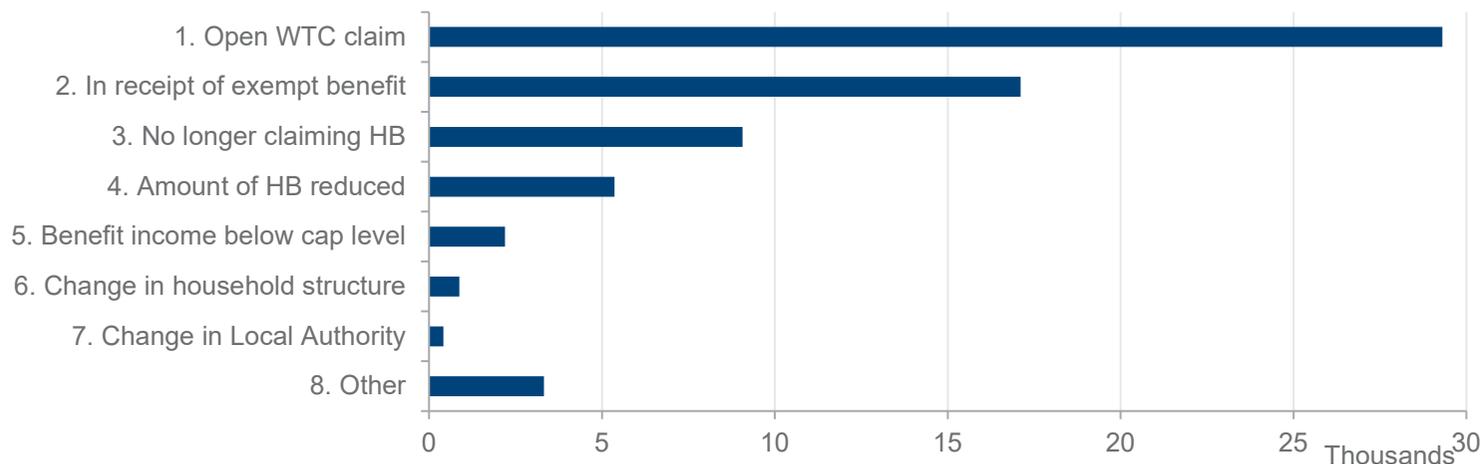
See [Data table 4](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

For single parent households with a child aged under 5 years, 37% (22,000) who have (previously) been capped are no longer capped at February 2017. Of these, 47% (10,000) are exempt with an open WTC claim.

For the first time we have produced a full breakdown of the number of households with children who have (previously) been capped but are no longer capped and the number that have moved into work by age of youngest child. See [Data tables 8 and 9](#) for full data. Further details can be found [here](#).

43% of households that were capped are in work

Off-flows from the cap by household outcome, at February 2017



More Information

The reason a household is no longer capped may change after a household has moved off the cap. The outcome shows this reason as at February 2017.

There may be several reasons why a household is no longer capped. These reasons are ranked (from 1 to 8, as in the chart above) and only the top-most reason that is applicable to each household is counted. More information on how the ranking was developed and is applied is in the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document.

About these statistics

Data sources

The main source of benefit cap data is the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE). SHBE is a monthly electronic scan of claimant level data direct from Local Authority computer systems. SHBE includes a field that contains the weekly amount that the Housing Benefit of a household has been capped by. This marker is central to the production of this analysis.

Data on those households who have (previously) been capped that are no longer capped is linked to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and DWP benefits data to determine why households are no longer capped.

The age of the youngest child dependant in a household is calculated by merging data held on HMRC child benefit systems to housing benefit data on capped households.

Data coverage and reporting month

Local Authorities extract and return their data to DWP over a four week rolling period based on an extraction schedule for each Local Authority. For example, the latest "February 2017" data shown here has typically been extracted between 23 January and 16 February 2017. Each Local Authority may extract their data up to a week before the date it is scheduled to be returned to DWP. Consequently, the statistics do not directly relate to a particular date but rather show the position of capped cases over a monthly cycle.

Definition of a household

For the purposes of the benefit cap policy and hence this analysis, a household is defined as "one or two adults (living together as a couple) plus any dependant children they are living with." This may also be termed a 'benefit unit'. This differs from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) who define a household as one person alone; or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area. A household by the ONS definition may contain multiple benefit units.

There are a small number of cases where an individual / household has more than one Housing Benefit claim, for these cases, only the most recent claim is reported on.

Changes to the benefit cap from 7 November 2016

The cap amounts and the benefits that are affected by the cap changed from 7 November 2016.

The Summer Budget 2015 announced changes to the level of the benefit cap to £20,000 a year (£13,400 for single adults with no children) nationally or £23,000 a year (£15,410 for single adults with no children) in Greater London (the 32 London boroughs and the City of London).

Claimants entitled to Carer's Allowance or Guardian's Allowance also became exempt from the benefit cap when these wider changes were introduced. This was announced in Parliament during the passage of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

The changes in cap levels were rolled-out across Local Authorities from 7 November 2016 to 20 January 2017.

Benefit Cap Judicial Review May 2017

In May 2017 a Judicial Review of two cases will be carried out in relation to the lowering of the benefit cap. The claimants challenge the treatment of two particular groups under the benefit cap – lone parents of children under two, and their dependent children, on the grounds that lone parents of young children under two are not expected by the Government to work (which is the primary route to avoid application of the cap). For the first time DWP have produced statistics on the number of households with

children who have (previously) been capped but are no longer capped and the number of these that have moved into work, with a full breakdown by age of youngest child as evidence for this review. These statistics, at November 2016 and February 2017, are included in the tables published alongside this release. See [Data tables 8 and 9](#).

Universal Credit

Statistics in this report only include households that have had their Housing Benefit capped. The benefit cap can also be applied through Universal Credit (UC). UC is still being rolled out across the country and for different household groups, meaning that the number of households who may have had their UC capped is estimated to be small. We are exploring the feasibility of publishing new experimental statistics on the number of households capped under both UC Live Service and UC Full Service roll-out. Presently, the data sources are not sufficiently robust to support publication of statistics but further work is underway to develop and quality-assure statistics on UC capped households.

Where to find out more

This document and summary tables can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-cap-number-of-households-capped-to-february-2017>

Use Stat-Xplore to create your own tables and further breakdowns of these statistics: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

View national and regional figures in our interactive visualisation: <https://bcapdash.herokuapp.com/index.html>

View figures for Local Authorities in our interactive map: <http://dwp-stats.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=9cfbe6a929db475587f8829cbc4bf1e5>

Older releases can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-cap-statistics>

Background Information for the statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-cap-statistics-background-information-and-methodology>

Statistics on Housing Benefit caseload can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-benefit-caseload-statistics>

More information on the benefit cap can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/benefit-cap/overview>