



Benefit Cap

Data to February 2019 ¹

Quarterly

Great Britain
Published: 2 May 2019

Official Statistics
(with Experimental Statistics on Universal Credit)

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.

The amount a household gets from some benefits might go down to make sure claimants do not get more than the cap limit. The benefit cap can be applied through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. The roll out of Universal Credit is now complete and it is available across the country.

Main stories

- 52,000 households had their Housing Benefit capped at February 2019.
- 14,000 households had their Universal Credit capped at February 2019.²

52,000 households had Housing Benefit capped and 14,000 had Universal Credit capped at February 2019

at February 2019

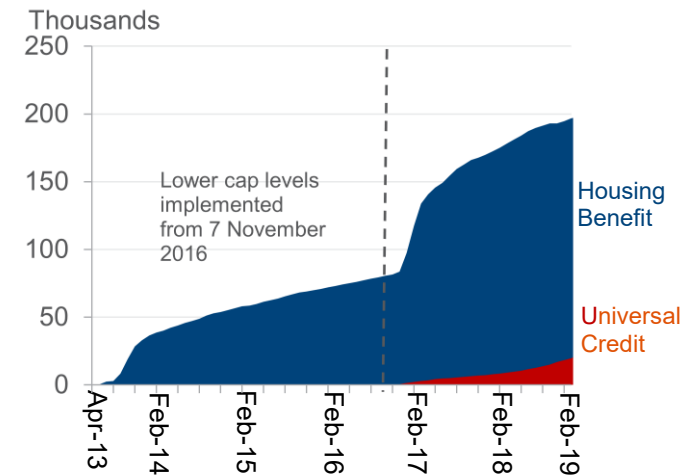
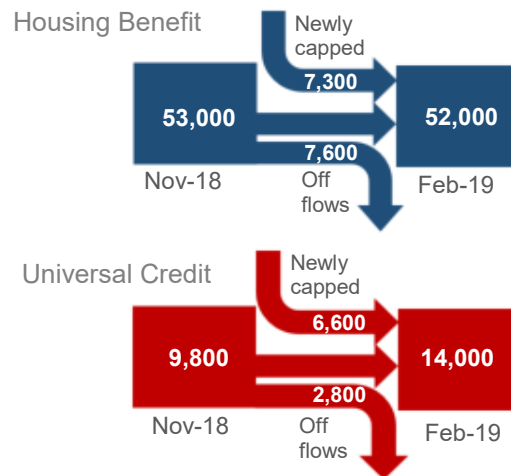
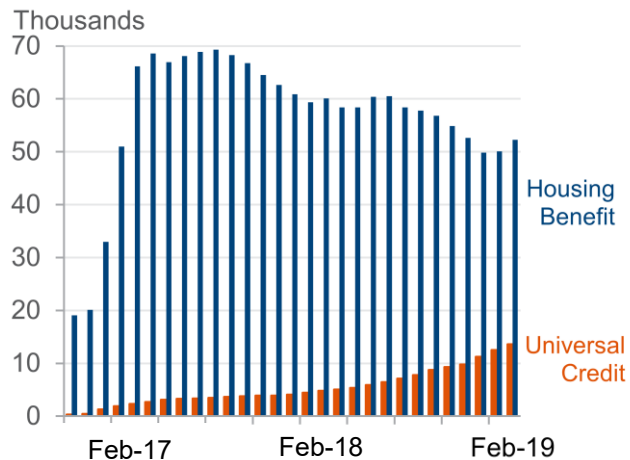
360 (1%) fewer households had Housing Benefit capped, while 3,800 (39%) more households had Universal Credit capped

³

at February 2019 compared to November 2018

200,000 households have had Housing Benefit capped and 26,000 households have had Universal Credit capped at some point

between April 2013 and February 2019



¹ Housing Benefit and Universal Credit cap statistics are measured differently. Housing Benefit statistics do not show the number of capped households on a particular date but over a monthly cycle, whilst Universal Credit statistics show the number of capped households on a specific date within the month. More information can be found on [Page 11](#).

² Figures for Universal Credit capped households include Universal Credit Full Service only. Due to data quality and reporting it is not possible to produce robust experimental statistics on the number of households that were capped under Universal Credit Live Service. The roll out of Full Service is complete, with all Live Service cases now moved across to Full Service. Full Service has been available in every Jobcentre across the country since December 2018.

³ As Universal Credit is now rolled out, many households who previously claimed Housing Benefit will now make a claim to Universal Credit. This will mean that some households who were previously capped under Housing Benefit may continue to be capped under Universal Credit. These households would be counted in the Housing Benefit off-flows from the cap statistics as 'No longer claiming HB with UC claim' and would appear as capped under Universal Credit. We do not report on the number of capped HB households that move onto being capped under UC.

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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 2019.

The cap applies to:

- the combined income from benefits including:
 - 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;
 - Universal Credit.

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. Unless otherwise stated, the statistics in this report relate to households that have had their HB capped.

The benefit cap can also be applied through Universal Credit (UC). Under UC the cap is applied to the full award not just to housing costs. This release also includes a [limited set of experimental statistics](#) on the number of households that have had their UC capped, including a cumulative caseload and off-flows from the cap under UC. As set out in the [response to the consultation on UC statistics](#), we plan to publish fuller statistics on UC capped households as quality assurance of data from the UC systems is progressed.

How is it measured?

The main source of data on households that have had their HB capped is [the Single Housing Benefit Extract \(SHBE\)](#), which is taken from Local Authority computer systems.

Data on households that have had their UC capped is taken from the [DWP UC Official Statistics database](#). This is compiled using data from systems within local offices and records of UC benefit payments made by DWP.

This report contains 4 measures:

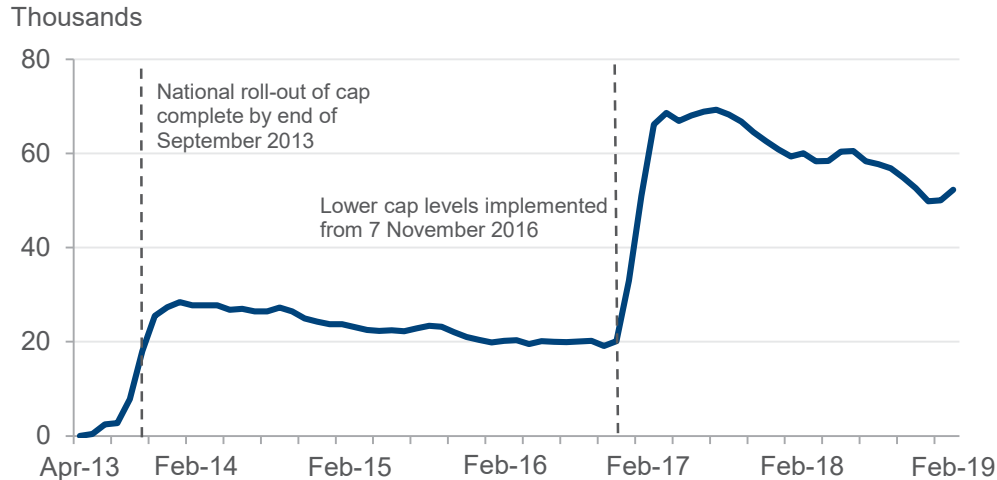
- For HB & UC capped households:
 - **Point-in-time caseload** counts the number of capped households each month.
 - **Cumulative caseload** counts the overall number of households that have ever been capped from the introduction of the benefit cap to the latest month. For UC this is from October 2016 to the latest month.
 - **Off-flows** are the number of previously capped households no longer capped at the latest month.
 - **On-flows** are the number of newly capped households each month.

For more information see the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document.

How many households have their Housing Benefit capped?

The number of capped households went down this quarter

Capped households at each month, 15 April 2013 to February 2019
(Housing Benefit only)



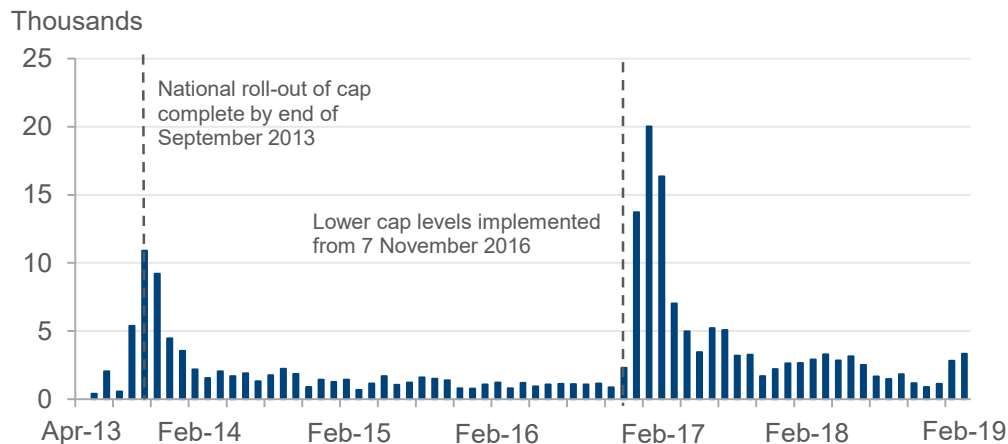
52,000 households had their Housing Benefit (HB) capped at February 2019, a decrease of 1%, or 360 households, on the previous quarter (November 2018). This decrease is due to fewer households having their HB capped for the first time this quarter (7,300) compared to the number of households moving off the cap (7,600).

Lower cap levels were initially applied to all households that already had their HB capped on 7 November 2016 and were then rolled-out across Great Britain to newly affected households from 7 November 2016 to 20 January 2017.

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

7,300 households newly capped in the last quarter

Newly capped households at each month, 15 April 2013 to February 2019
(Housing Benefit only)



7,300 households had their HB capped for the first time this quarter (December 2018 to February 2019).

This is 3,400 households higher than last quarter (September 2018 to November 2018), when 3,900 households had their HB capped for the first time.

The number of households having their HB capped for the first time peaked in January 2017, when the roll-out of the lower cap levels was completed. Since then the numbers of households being capped for the first time has remained higher than before the lower cap levels were implemented.

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

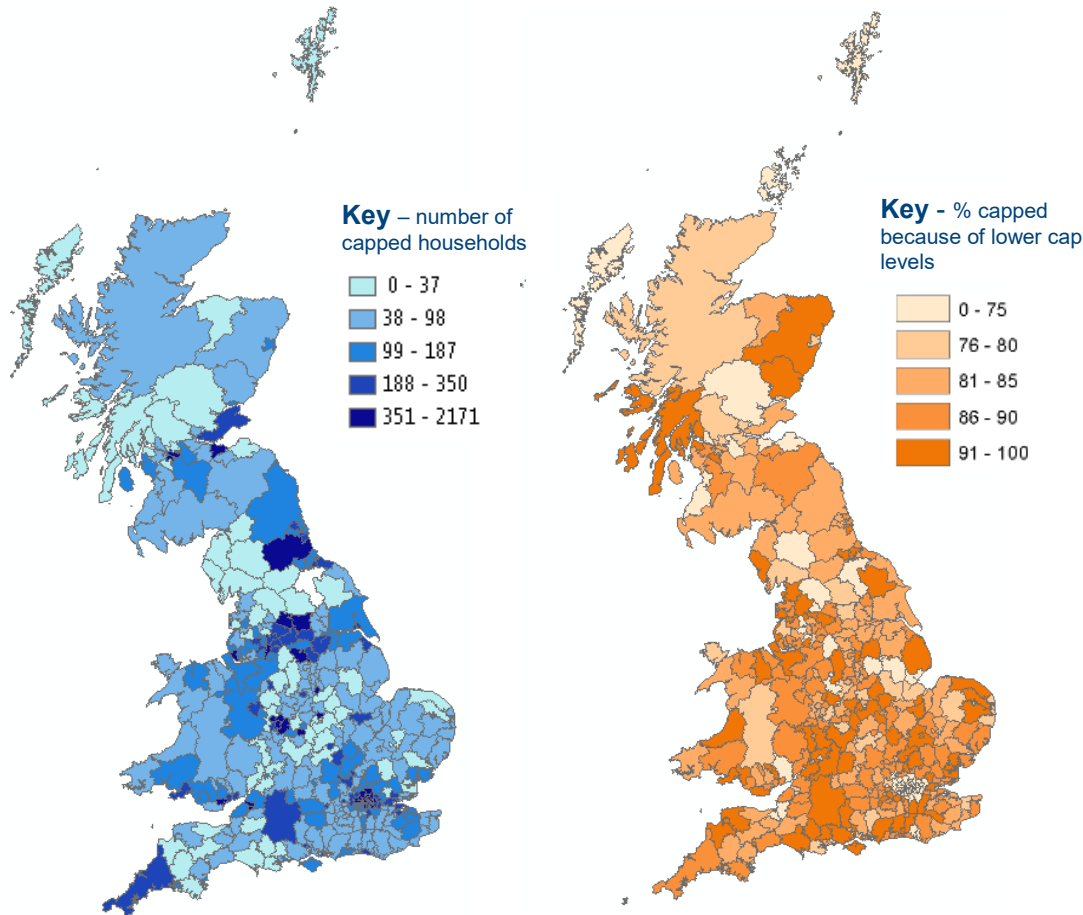
Where capped households are

79% of capped households have their Housing Benefit capped because of the introduction of lower cap levels ⁴

Capped households by Local Authority, February 2019
(Housing Benefit only)

Number of capped households

Percentage of capped households capped because of lower cap levels ⁵



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.

The map on the left shows the number of households that had their Housing Benefit (HB) capped by Local Authority (LA) at February 2019. The darker areas of the map are LAs with higher numbers of capped households.

The distribution of capped households is more evenly spread across the country than before the new cap levels were introduced; at February 2019 23% of households that had their HB capped were in London, compared to 40% at November 2016. However, the highest numbers of capped households are still found in large urban areas like London and Birmingham.

The map on the right shows the percentage of capped households that had their HB capped only because of the introduction of lower cap levels by LA, at February 2019. The darker the LA on the map the higher the percentage of capped households capped only because of the lower cap levels.

Across Great Britain 79% (41,000) of households capped at February 2019 were capped only because of the introduction of the lower cap levels.

See [Data table 3](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data on the number of capped households by LA and [Data table 7](#) for full data on the number of households capped because of the lower cap levels.

Where you live

Find more statistics about households that have had their HB capped in your LA on our [interactive map](#), which is updated on a yearly basis and includes data up to May 2018. 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>

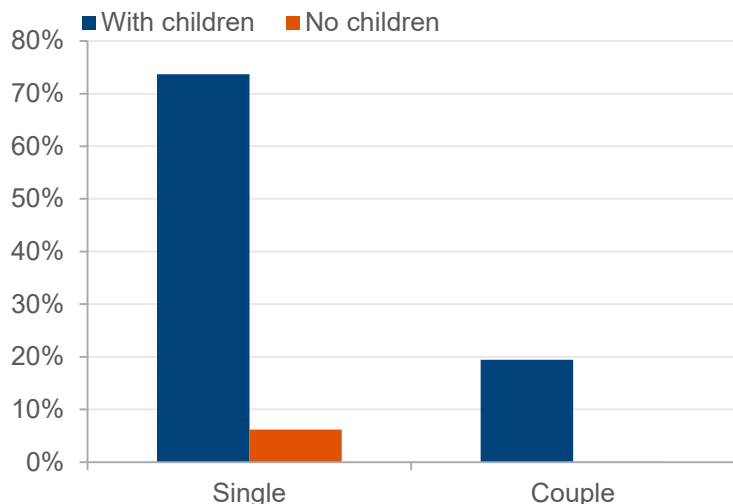
⁴ The amount a household had their Housing Benefit capped by at February 2019 is used to determine if a household would have been capped if the cap levels had remained at the pre-7 November 2016 levels or is only capped because of the introduction of the lower cap levels. See [Data Table 7](#) for a full explanation of the methodology used for this analysis.

⁵ Statistical disclosure control may on occasion lead to irregular percentage values. Where this occurs percentages are capped at 100%. More information on this can be found in the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document and [Stat Xplore](#).

The family make-up of capped households

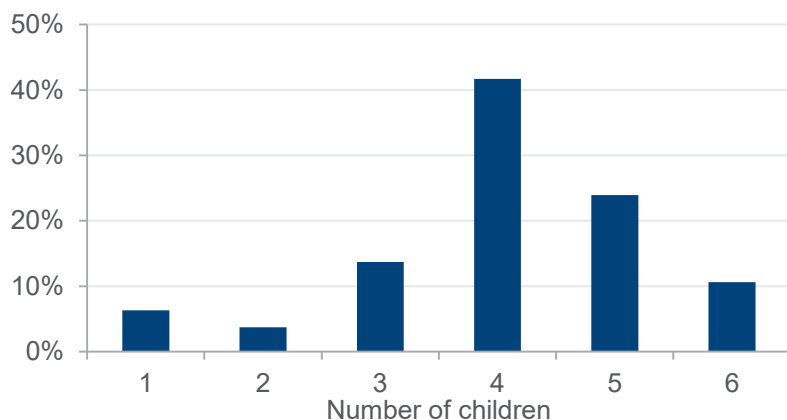
7 in 10 households that have their Housing Benefit capped are single-parent families

Percentage of capped households by family type, at February 2019
(Housing Benefit only)



Most capped households include children

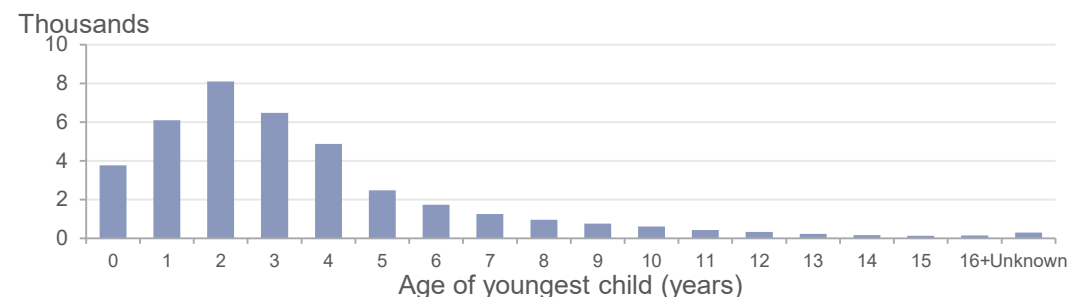
Percentage of capped households by number of children, at February 2019
(Housing Benefit only)



74% (39,000) of households that had their Housing Benefit capped at February 2019 are single-parent families.

76% (29,000) of single-parent capped households have at least one child aged under 5 years, including 25% (9,900) with a child aged under 2 years at February 2019.⁶

Single-parent capped households by age of youngest child, at February 2019
(Housing Benefit only)



At February 2019, 94% (49,000) of households that had their Housing Benefit capped include children; 83% (43,000) had between 1 and 4 children and 11% (5,600) had 5 or more children.

Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits are both in-scope for the Housing Benefit cap, so households in receipt of these benefits are more likely to exceed the cap limit and be capped.

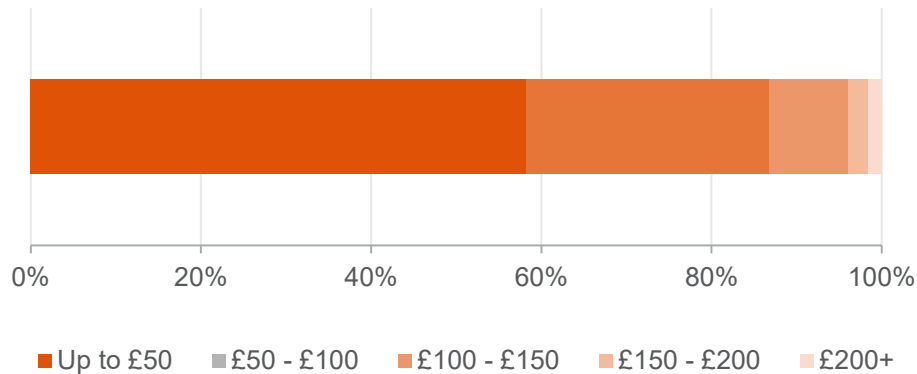
See [Data table 2](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data on the family make-up of capped households. See [Data table 5](#) for full data on the age of youngest child by family type at February 2019. [Data table 8](#) includes data on the cumulative caseload by family type and age of youngest child.

⁶ These statistics were originally developed to inform Judicial Reviews in relation to the benefit cap, and its application to lone parents with children under 2, and children under 5. More information can be found on page 10 under [Benefit Cap Judicial Reviews](#).

The financial impact of being capped

58% of capped households have their Housing Benefit capped by £50 or less a week

Capped households by weekly amount capped, at February 2019
(Housing Benefit only)



At February 2019, 58% (30,000) of capped households had their Housing Benefit capped by £50 or less a week, with a further 29% (15,000) of households capped by £50 to £100 per week.

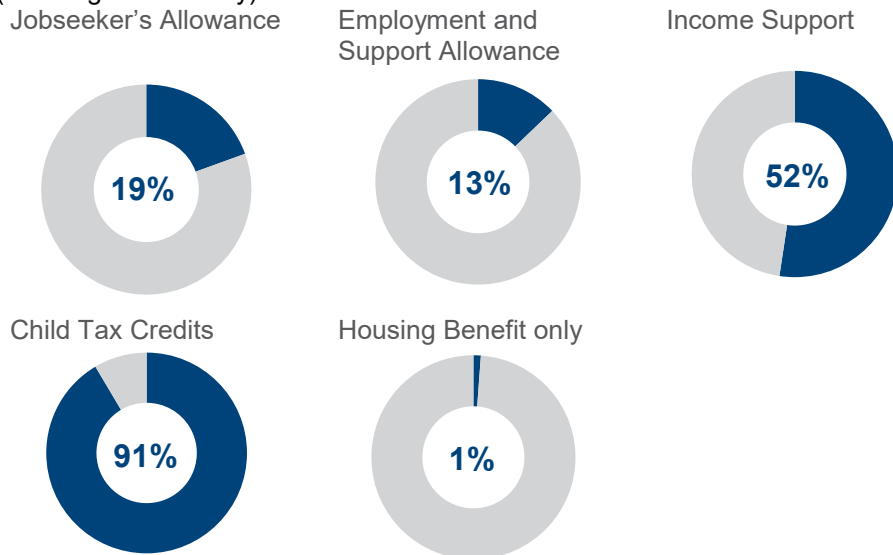
2% (820) of capped households had their Housing Benefit capped by more than £200 a week at February 2019, including 0.4% (200) capped by more than £300 a week.

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.

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

Capped households claim a range of benefits

Capped households by benefit take-up, at February 2019
(Housing Benefit only)



At February 2019:

- 19% (10,000) of capped households were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.
- 13% (6,700) were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (Assessment Stage and Work-Related Activity Group only).
- 52% (27,000) were claiming Income Support.
- 91% (48,000) were claiming Child Tax Credits.
- 1% (610) 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.

More information

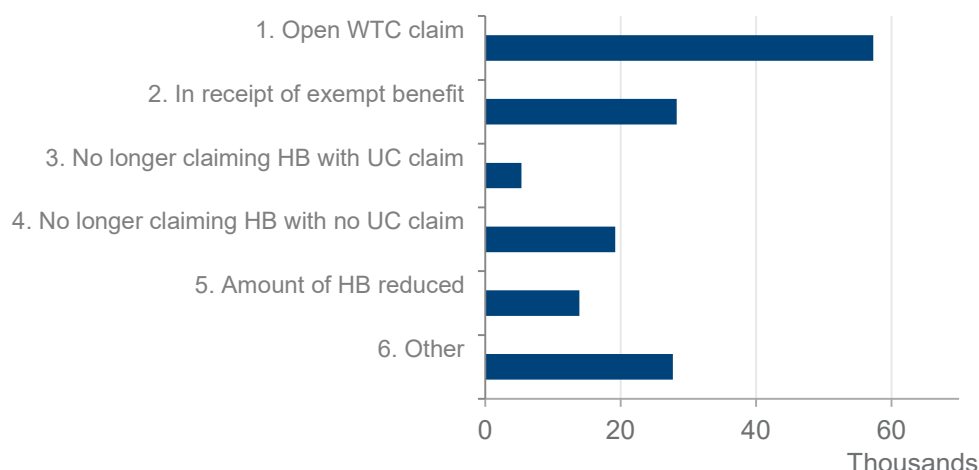
Capped households can be in receipt of multiple benefits and therefore percentages for households in receipt of each benefit do not sum to 100%. More information on benefits that are in-scope for the benefit cap and those that are exempt can be found in the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document.

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

Moving off the cap

38% of all households that previously had their Housing Benefit capped moved into work and off the benefit cap

Off-flows from the cap at February 2019 by household outcome at off-flow (Housing Benefit only)



74% (150,000) of households that have had their Housing Benefit capped prior to February 2019, are no longer capped at February 2019. This is an increase of 7,600 households on the previous quarter (November 2018).

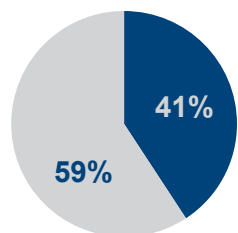
Of the 150,000 households that no longer had their Housing Benefit capped at February 2019, 57,000 were exempt with an open Working Tax Credit (WTC) claim at the time they moved off the cap, indicating that they moved into work. This is 38% of those no longer capped.

5,400 (4%) households that no longer had their Housing Benefit capped at February 2019 were no longer claiming Housing Benefit when they moved off the cap but had started to claim Universal Credit (UC). We do not report on whether these households were then still capped under UC.

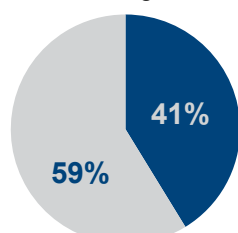
See [Data table 4](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

Off-flows from the cap at February 2019 by household outcome at off-flow for single parent households (Housing Benefit only)

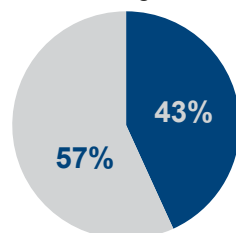
All single parent households



Single parent households with a child aged under 2



Single parent households with a child aged under 5



■ Open WTC claim ■ All other off-flows

For single parent households with a child aged under 2 years, 69% (21,000) who have at some point had their Housing Benefit capped are no longer capped at February 2019. Of these, 41% (8,800) were exempt with an open WTC claim when they moved off the cap, indicating that they moved into work.

For single-parent households with a child aged under 5 years, 65% (54,000) who have previously had their Housing Benefit capped are no longer capped at February 2019. Of these, 43% (23,000) were exempt with an open WTC claim when they moved off the cap, indicating that they moved into work.

See [Data table 8](#) for a full data by age of youngest child. Further details can be found [here](#).

More Information

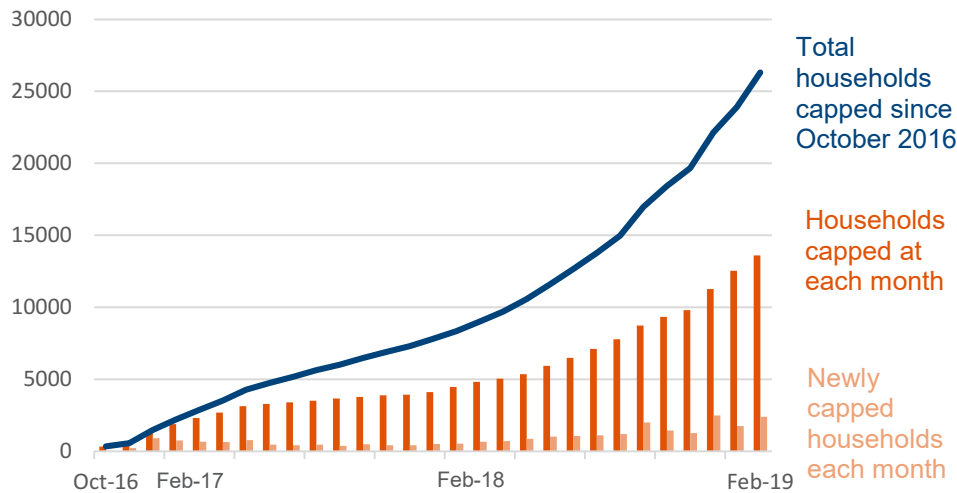
There may be several reasons why a household is no longer capped. These reasons are ranked (as in the table above) and only the top-most reason that is applicable to each household is counted. More information on how the ranking was developed and is applied is in the [Background Information and Methodology](#)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

Off-flow outcomes are shown as at the end of the quarter in which a household moved off the benefit cap, meaning the outcomes are fixed at that point, unless a household is re-capped at a later date. More detail on the way off-flow outcomes are determined is included in the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document.

How many households have their Universal Credit capped? ⁷

The number of households that have their Universal Credit capped is growing, as Universal Credit has been rolled out

Capped households at each month, October 2016 to 14 February 2019 ⁸
(Universal Credit only)



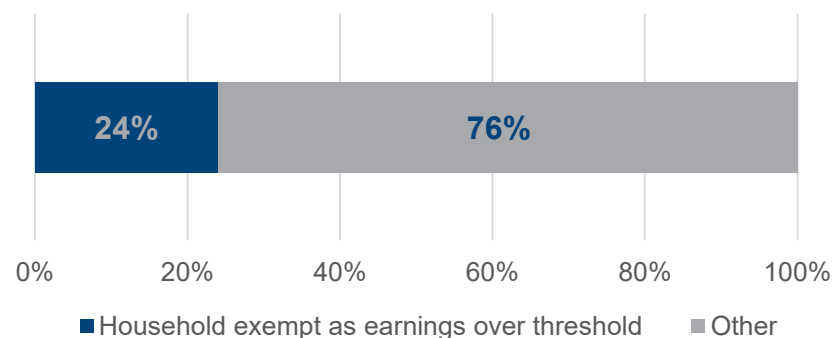
14,000 households had their Universal Credit capped at 14 February 2019, with 6,600 newly capped under UC between December and February 2019. Whilst the number of Universal Credit capped households is still small compared to the number of households that have had their Housing Benefit capped (52,000 households had their Housing Benefit capped at February 2019), it is increasing.

The roll out of Universal Credit is now complete and it is available across the country for all household groups. By 2023, all existing legacy claimants will be moved to Universal Credit. This will mean that some households who were previously capped under Housing Benefit may continue to be capped under Universal Credit. These households would be counted in the Housing Benefit off-flows from the cap statistics as 'No longer claiming HB with UC claim' and would appear as capped under Universal Credit. We do not report on the number of capped HB households that move onto being capped under UC.

26,000 households have had their Universal Credit capped since October 2016.

See [Data table 11](#) for full data on point-in-time caseload and [Data table 12](#) for full data on cumulative caseload.

Off-flows from the cap at 14 February 2019, by household outcome at off-flow ⁹ (Universal Credit only)



Benefit cap off-flow statistics for Universal Credit (UC) and Housing Benefit (HB) are not directly comparable as the UC and HB policies are different. Universal Credit has further off-flow statistics still in development.

48% (13,000) of households that have ever had their Universal Credit capped are no longer capped at 14 February 2019.

Of the 13,000 households that no longer had their Universal Credit capped at 14 February 2019, 24% (3,100) became exempt as they were earning more than the threshold at which households become exempt from the benefit cap. ¹⁰

⁷ Figures for Universal Credit capped households include Universal Credit Full Service only. Due to data quality and reporting it is not possible to produce robust experimental statistics on the number of households that were capped under Universal Credit Live Service. The roll out of Full Service is complete, with all Live Service cases having now moved across to Full Service. Universal Credit Full Service has been available in every Jobcentre across the country since December 2018.

Data on Universal Credit is available from October 2016 only. Universal Credit statistics are subject to retrospection as in some instances Universal Credit awards may be retrospectively revised.

⁸ Universal Credit data, unlike Housing Benefit data, is taken on a particular 'count date' each month; the point in time values therefore represent the caseload on this date, which is included in this report for clarity. More information can be found at [Data coverage and reporting month](#).

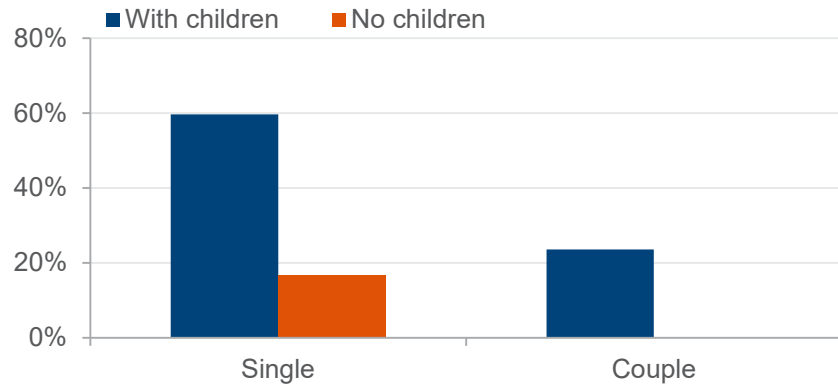
⁹ We are working on developing further off-flow outcome categories for future publications, as quality assurance of data from Universal Credit systems is progressed.

¹⁰ More information on the earnings exemption threshold is included in the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document.

Households that have their Universal Credit Capped ¹¹

60% of households that had their Universal Credit capped are single-parent families

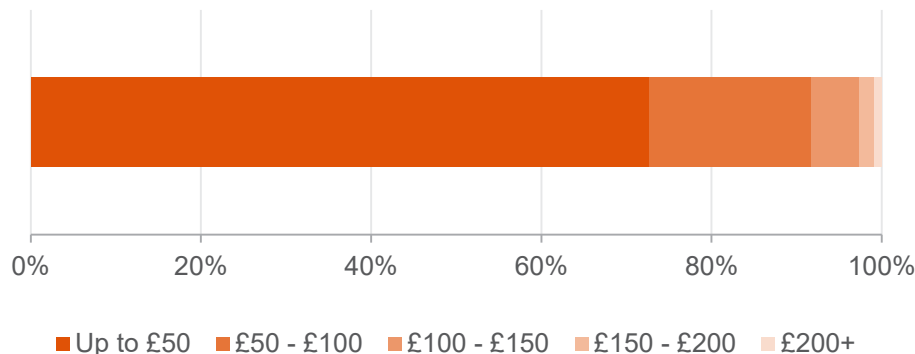
Percentage of capped households by family type, at 14 February 2019 ¹²
(Universal Credit only)



83% (11,000) of households that have their Universal Credit (UC) capped as at 14 February 2019 include children; 60% (8,100) are single-parent families and 24% (3,200) are couples with children.

See [Data table 9](#) for full data.

Capped households by weekly amount capped, at 14 February 2019
(Universal Credit only)



At 14 February 2019 73% (9,900) of households that had their Universal Credit capped were capped by the equivalent of £50 or less a week, with a further 19% (2,600) of households capped by the equivalent of £50 to £100 per week.

1% (120) of capped households had their Universal Credit capped by the equivalent of £200 or more a week at 14 February 2019.

See [Data table 9](#) for full data and more information on how weekly cap amounts were calculated for households that had their Universal Credit capped, as **Universal Credit is paid monthly not weekly**.

Unlike legacy benefits, Universal Credit is assessed and paid monthly and it is calculated based on the household circumstances. The benefit cap is applied to the full Universal Credit award not just to housing costs. Therefore **direct comparisons of cap amounts across Housing Benefit and Universal Credit cannot be made**.

¹¹ Figures for Universal Credit capped households relate to Universal Credit Full Service only. Due to data quality and reporting it is not possible to produce robust experimental statistics on the number of households that were capped under Universal Credit Live Service. The roll out of Full Service is complete, with all Live Service cases having now moved across to Full Service. Universal Credit Full Service has been available in every Jobcentre across the country since December 2018.

¹² Universal Credit data, unlike Housing Benefit data, is taken on a particular 'count date' each month; the point in time values therefore represent the caseload on this date, which is included in this report for clarity. More information can be found at [Data coverage and reporting month](#).

Experimental Statistics on households that had their Universal Credit capped

This release contains experimental statistics on the number of households that have had their Universal Credit capped, alongside the regular quarterly Housing Benefit cap statistics. From August 2018 we have published a cumulative caseload for households capped under Universal Credit and the number of off-flows. The off-flows are broken down to show the number of households that have become exempt from the cap due to their earnings.

Universal Credit was introduced in 2013 and is now available for all new claims from single jobseekers wherever they are in Great Britain. The expansion of Universal Credit across the country was started in May 2016, and roll out was completed in 2018. The government currently plans that by 2023, all existing legacy claimants will have moved on to Universal Credit. Because the roll out of Universal Credit has been gradual and only relatively recently has it become available in every Jobcentre, the number of households capped under Universal Credit is still small in comparison to the number of households that have had their Housing Benefit capped.

Figures for Universal Credit capped households include Universal Credit Full Service only. Due to data quality and reporting it is not possible to produce robust experimental statistics on the number of households that were capped under Universal Credit Live Service. The roll out of Full Service was completed in December 2018, and it is now available in every Jobcentre across the country.

As set out in the [Universal Credit statistics consultation response](#), we are working on developing further breakdowns of the characteristics of capped households and off-flows from the Universal Credit cap for future publications.

Data sources

Data used to create the statistics comes from administrative databases. For these, accuracy is determined by how well the information is recorded and transmitted.

- **Housing Benefit Data**

The main source of data on households that had their Housing Benefit capped 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 the statistics on households that had their Housing Benefit 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. DWP benefits data is merged with Housing Benefit data on capped households to give information on the types of benefits claimed by capped households.

Data on those households who have ever had their Housing Benefit 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.

- **Universal Credit Data**

Data on households that have had their Universal Credit capped is taken from the DWP Universal Credit Official Statistics database, which is compiled using data from systems within local offices and records of Universal Credit benefit payments made by the Department. This database includes a field that contains the amount of Universal Credit that a household has been capped by for an assessment period. This marker is used in the production of statistics on households that had their Universal Credit capped.

This database only contains information for households that have had their Universal Credit Full Service capped. Due to data quality and reporting it is not possible to produce robust experimental statistics on the number of households that were capped under Universal Credit Live Service.

Data on households that had their Universal Credit capped is merged with the DWP Customer Information Service address file so that the number of capped households can be broken down by region and Local Authority.

Data on households that have had their Universal Credit capped is matched with the full DWP Universal Credit Official Statistics database to obtain information on earnings, which is used to determine which households moved off the cap under Universal Credit due to becoming exempt due to their earnings.

Data coverage and reporting month

Local Authorities (LAs) extract and return their Housing Benefit data to DWP over a four week rolling period based on an extraction schedule for each LA. For example, the latest “February 2019” data shown here has typically been extracted between 28 January and 21 February 2019. Each LA 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.

To be counted as being on Universal Credit a household must have an assessment period spanning the ‘count date’ for a particular month. An assessment period is the period of a month for which a Universal Credit payment is made. The count date is the second Thursday of the month. Entitlement to Universal Credit must also have been calculated.

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 dependent 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 amounts 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).

The changes in cap levels were rolled-out across Local Authorities (LAs) from 7 November 2016 to 20 January 2017. From March 2017 data for all LAs reflects the lower cap levels.

Benefit Cap Judicial Reviews

DWP produced statistics on the number of households with children who have previously had their Housing Benefit 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 to inform Judicial Reviews in relation to the benefit cap, initially heard in the High Court in May 2017. These statistics, at November 2016 and February 2017, were included in the tables published in the May 2017 statistical release (see [Data tables 8 and 9](#)). Updated figures, at February 2019, are included in the tables published as part of this statistical release, in [Data table 8](#).

The claimants in the Judicial Review challenged the application of the benefit cap to two particular groups – lone parents of children under two and their dependent children aged under 2, on the grounds that it unlawfully discriminates against them. In the judgement, which was handed down on 22 June 2017, the Judge ruled against the Government but this ruling has been appealed. The Court of Appeal hearing was heard on 24 and 25 October 2017 and the Court has now found in the Government’s favour, that the benefit cap legislation is lawful in its application to lone parents with children under 2. This case was heard at the Supreme Court on 17 – 19 July 2018, alongside a further Judicial Review which challenged the application of the benefit cap to all lone parents, and in particular lone parents with children under 5 and their dependent children aged under 5. A ruling is awaited.¹³

¹³ The date of this judgement will be announced on the Supreme Court website: <https://www.supremecourt.uk/news/future-judgments.html>

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-2019>

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/>

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>

Statistics on Universal Credit can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/universal-credit-statistics>

Statistics on Local Authorities' use of Discretionary Housing Payment funds can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/discretionary-housing-payments-statistics>

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

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Comments? Feedback is welcome