



Benefit Cap

Data to August 2019

Quarterly

Great Britain
Published: 7 November 2019.

Official Statistics
(with Experimental Statistics on Universal Credit)

There is a limit on the total amount of benefit that most working age people 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

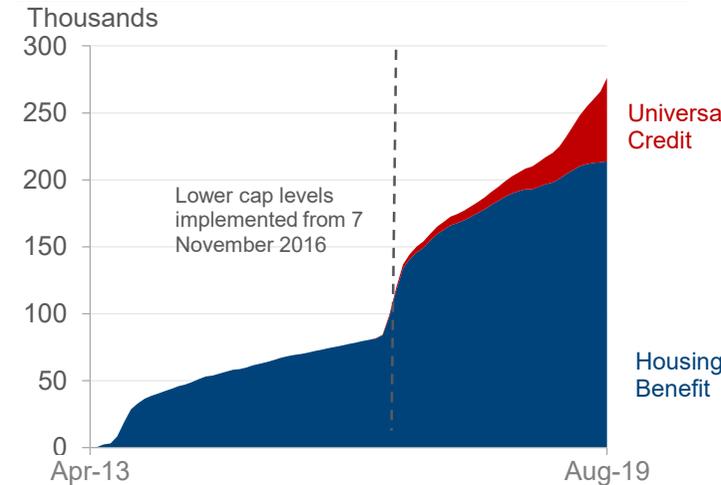
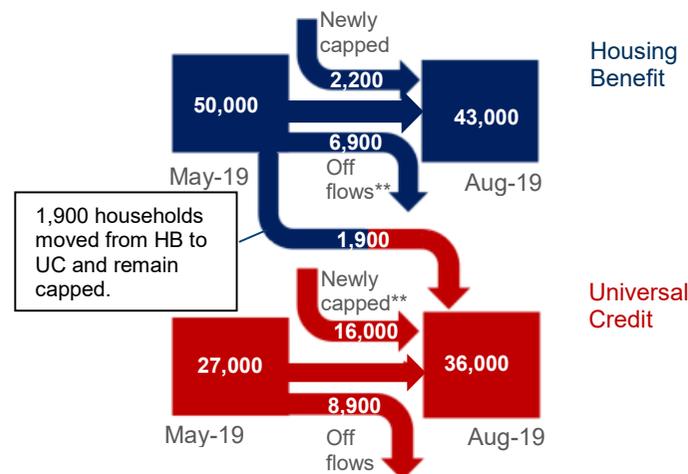
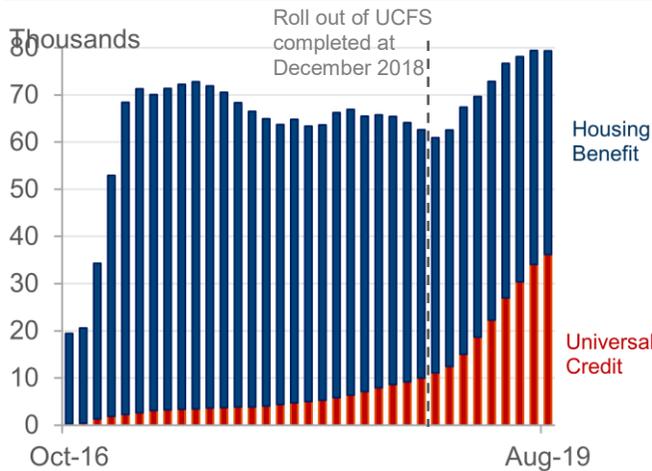
The benefit cap was introduced from April 2013, with the cap level set initially at £26,000 per year, or £18,200 per year for single adults with no children. The Summer Budget 2015 announced changes to the level of the benefit cap to £20,000 per year (or £13,400 for single adults with no children) nationally, or £23,000 per year (£15,410 for single adults with no children) in Greater London. The lower cap levels were introduced from 7 November 2016 and remain the current cap limits.

Main stories

79,000 households had their benefits capped: 43,000 had Housing Benefit capped and 36,000 had Universal Credit capped at August 2019

2,700* more households had their benefits capped: 6,600 (13%) fewer households had Housing Benefit capped, whilst 9,200 (34%) more households had Universal Credit capped at August 2019 compared to May 2019

280,000 households have been capped: 210,000 have had Housing Benefit capped and 62,000 have had Universal Credit capped at some point between April 2013 and August 2019



* Figures relating to households capped under universal credit are subject to retrospection and have been updated at August 2019. For more information see the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document.

**The method to determine whether households that move from HB to UC are then capped under UC has now been developed. As of August 2019, the definition of newly capped has changed, and now refers to households who have their benefits capped for the first time (under either HB or UC). As such, households who move from the HB to UC cap would not be considered newly capped on UC. These households would be counted in both the HB and UC cumulative totals, but only once in the total Benefit Cap cumulative caseload. Off flows from the HB cap are only those who do not move to have UC capped at the end of the quarter.

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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 working age people can get.

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

The benefit cap can be applied by reducing the amount of Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) that a household receives, so their total benefits no longer add up to more than the cap level. Detail of the cap levels is available [here](#).

This release includes statistics on the number of households that have had their benefits capped, including a cumulative caseload and off-flows from the cap. From August 2019 we publish statistics on children in UC capped households. We are also able to identify whether households who move from HB to UC then have their UC capped. As set out in the [response to the consultation on UC statistics](#), we plan to publish fuller statistics on UC capped households.

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. UC data is returned on a particular count date each month. **UC statistics refer to UC Full Service only.**

This report contains 5 measures:

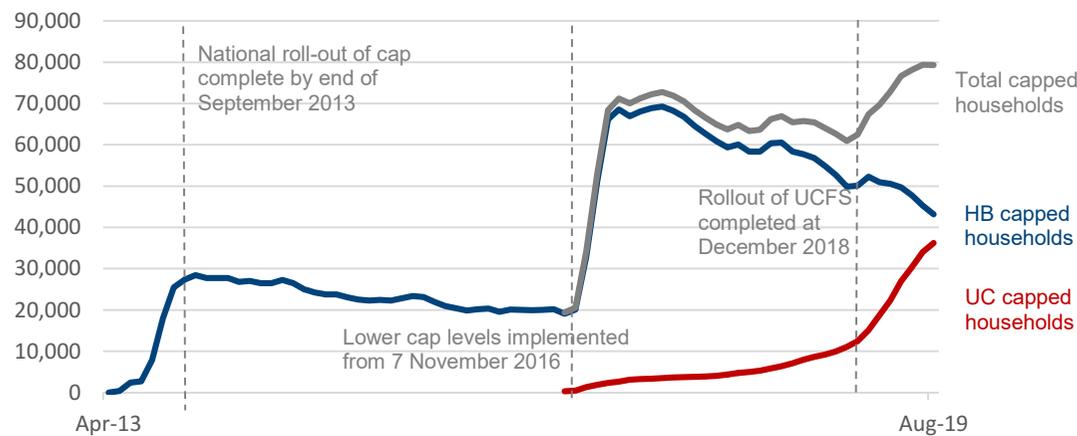
- For capped households:
 - **Point-in-time caseload** counts the number of capped households each month.
 - **Cumulative caseload** counts the overall number of households that have ever been capped from the introduction of the benefit cap to the latest month. For UC this is from October 2016 to the latest month.
 - **Off-flows** are the number of previously capped households no longer capped at the latest month.
 - **On-flows** are the number of households that have their HB or UC capped for the first time each month.
 - **Newly capped** are the number of households that have their benefits capped for the very first time. This excludes on flows to the UC cap who were previously capped under HB.

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

How many households have their benefits capped?

The number of capped households went up this quarter

Capped households at each month, April 2013 to August 2019



79,000 households had their benefits capped at August 2019, an increase of 3%, or 2,700 households, on the previous quarter (May 2019)*. This increase is due to more households having their benefits capped for the first time this quarter (19,000) than the number of households moving off the cap (16,000).

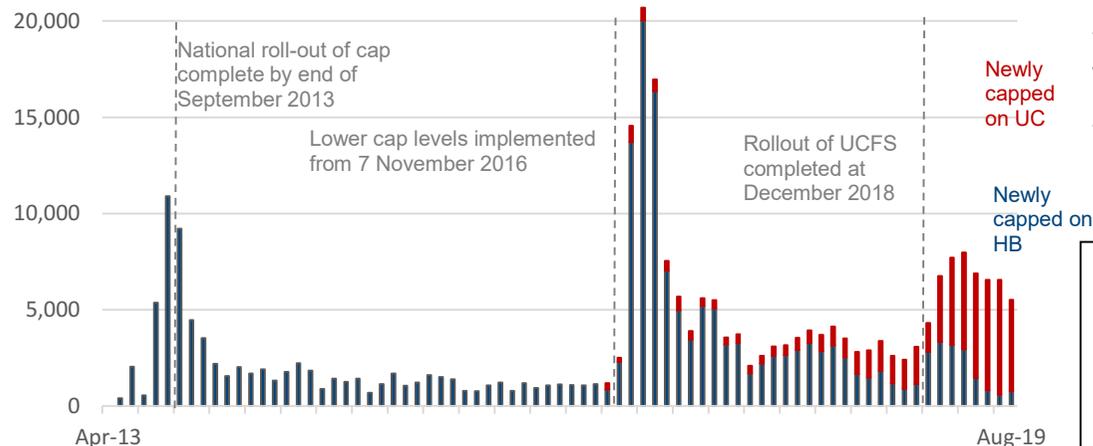
Universal Credit was introduced in 2013, and the benefit cap applies to both UC Live Service and Full Service. Data on households with their UC capped is available for October 2016 onwards, for Full Service only.

Lower cap levels were initially applied to all households that already had their benefits 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](#), [Data table 11](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

19,000 households newly capped in the last quarter

Newly capped households at each month, April 2013 to August 2019



19,000 households had their benefits capped for the first time this quarter (June 2019 to August 2019).

This is 4,000 households fewer than last quarter (March 2019 to May 2019), when 23,000 households had their benefits 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.

The method to determine whether households that move from HB to UC are then capped under UC has now been developed. Due to this, as of August 2019, the definition of newly capped has changed, and now refers to households who have their benefits capped for the first time. As such, households who move from the HB to UC cap would not be considered newly capped on UC.

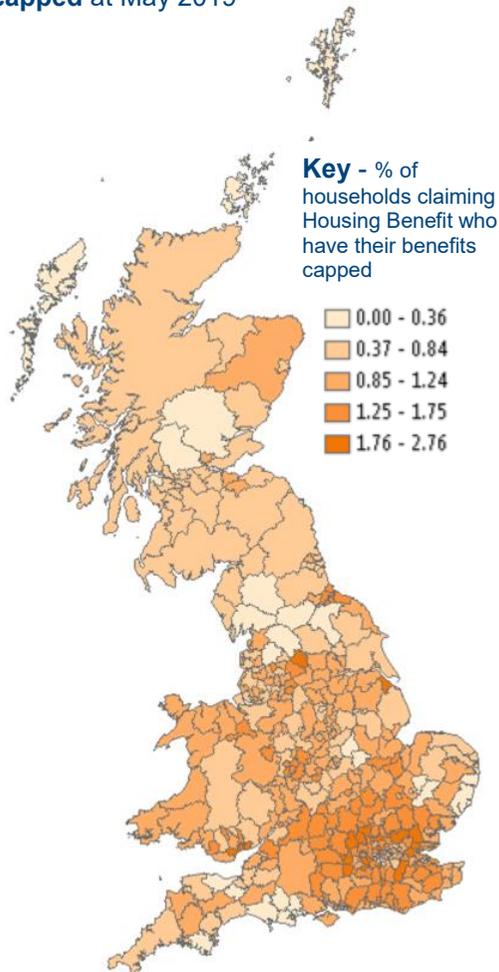
*Figures relating to households capped under universal credit are subject to retrospection and have been updated at August 2019. For more information see the [Background Information and Methodology](#) document. Due to data quality and reporting it is not possible to produce robust experimental statistics 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.

The proportion of benefit claiming households capped

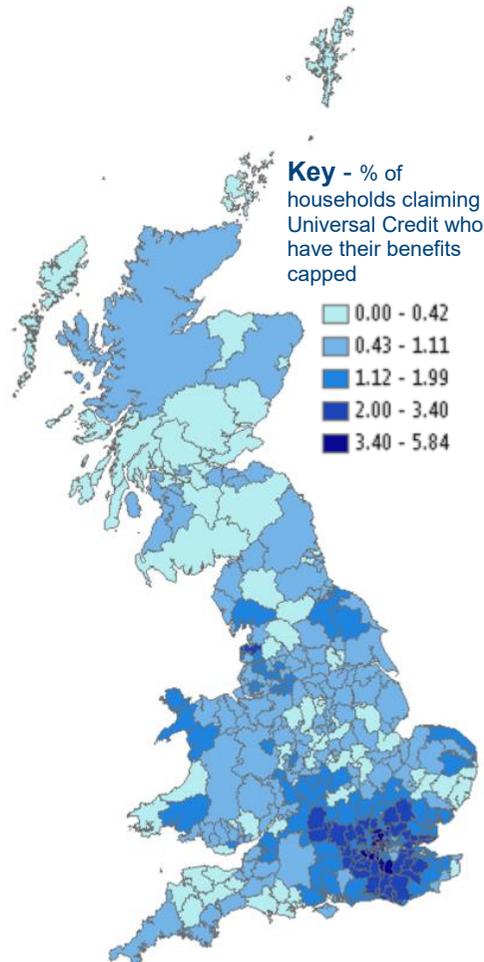
Experimental statistics

London has the highest proportion of HB households capped at May 2019

Proportion of HB claiming households who have their benefits capped at May 2019



Proportion of UC claiming households who have their benefits capped at May 2019



The map on the left shows the proportion of Housing Benefit claiming households who have their benefits capped.

South East England has the highest proportion of Housing Benefit households affected by the benefit cap, at 1.4% at May 2019. At May 2019, Scotland is the region with the lowest proportion of HB households capped at 0.6%.

The map on the right shows the proportion of Universal Credit claiming households who have their benefits capped. Figures relate to UC 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.

Excluding unknown regions, London has the highest proportion of Universal Credit households affected by the benefit cap, at 2.3% at May 2019. Of the 10 Local Authorities (LAs) with the highest proportion of UC households having their benefits capped, 7 of them are in London.

August 2019 caseload data for households claiming Housing Benefit and Universal Credit was not available at the time of publishing. These statistics therefore refer to **May 2019** (the latest available caseload date).

Where you live

Find more statistics about households that have had their benefits capped in your LA on our [interactive map](#), which is updated on a yearly basis and includes data up to May 2019. 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>

Housing Benefit and Universal Credit statistics are based on different geographies. It is important to note the distinction between residence-based (for UC) and administration-based (for HB) geographies, which are not always directly comparable. See the [Background Information and Methodology document](#) for more information.

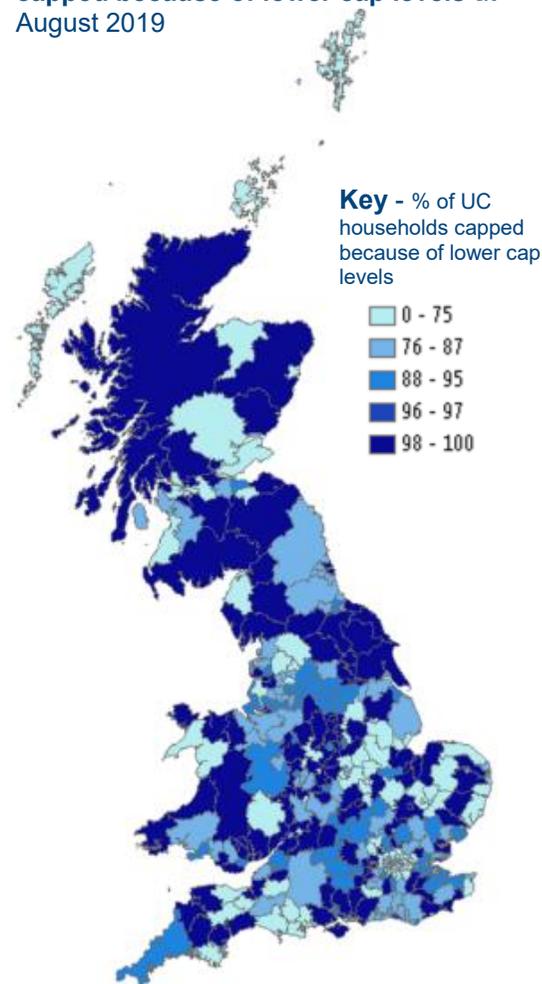
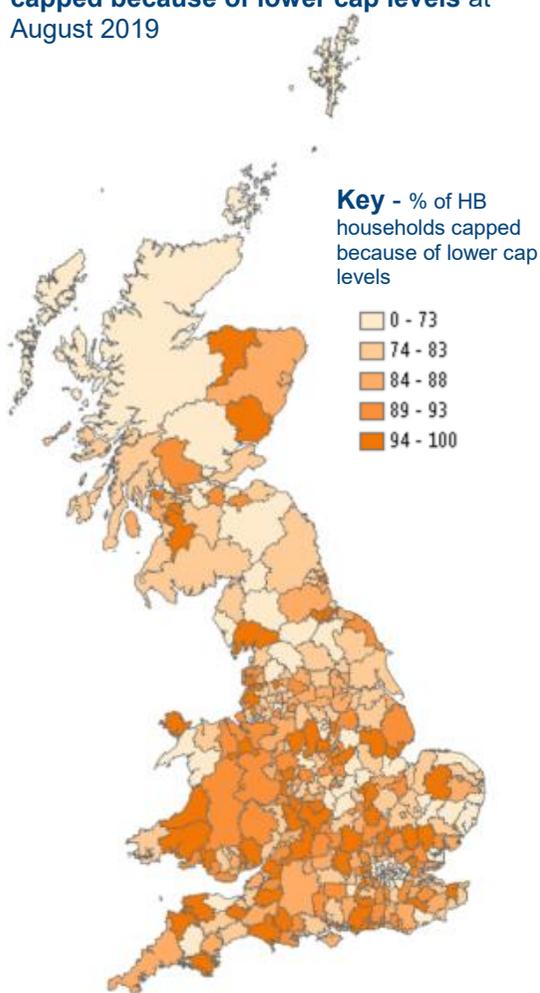
Households capped only due to lower cap levels

Experimental statistics

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

Percentage of capped HB households capped because of lower cap levels at August 2019

Percentage of capped UC households capped because of lower cap levels at August 2019



The benefit cap was introduced from April 2013. The Summer Budget 2015 announced changes to the level of the benefit cap and the [different cap levels for households inside and outside Greater London were introduced](#) from 7 November 2016 and remain the current cap limits.

The maps show the percentage of HB and UC capped households that had their benefits capped only because of the introduction of lower cap levels by Local Authority (LA), at August 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% (34,000) of HB households capped at August 2019 were capped only because of the introduction of the lower cap levels.

See [Data table 7](#) for full data on the number of HB households capped because of the lower cap levels.

Universal Credit was introduced in 2013. The expansion of Universal Credit across the country began in May 2016, and roll out was completed in 2018. At August 2019, 81% (29,000) of UC households were capped only because of the lower cap levels.

See [Data table 14](#) for full data on the number of HB 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 August 2019. Key statistics for a LA can be viewed by clicking the relevant area of the map.

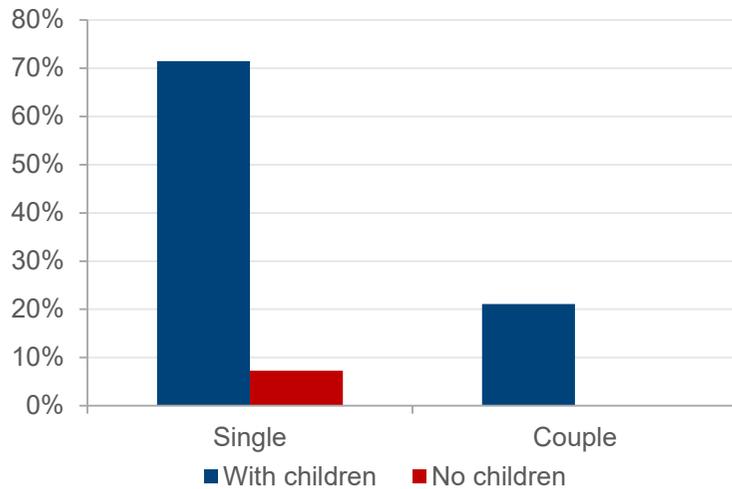
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Housing Benefit and Universal Credit statistics are based on different geographies. It is important to note the distinction between residence-based (for UC) and administration-based (for HB) geographies, which are not always directly comparable. See the [Background Information and Methodology document](#) for more information.

The family make-up of capped households

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

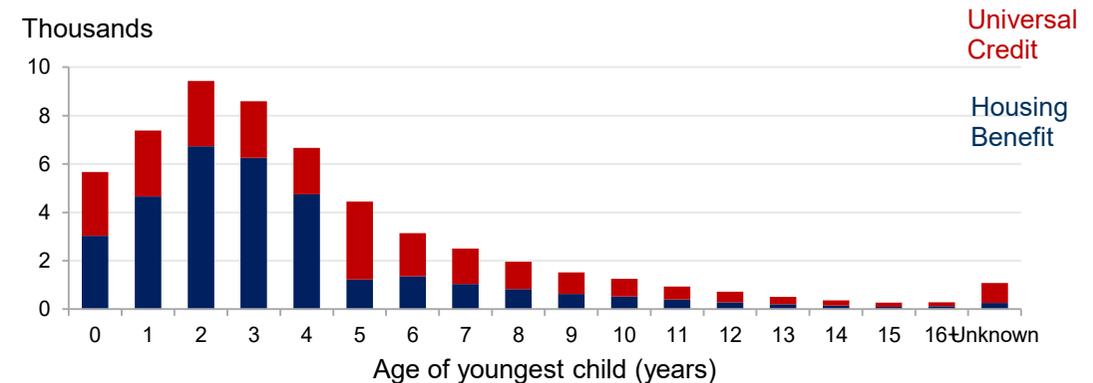
Percentage of capped households by family type, at August 2019



71% (57,000) of households that had their benefits capped at August 2019 are single-parent families.

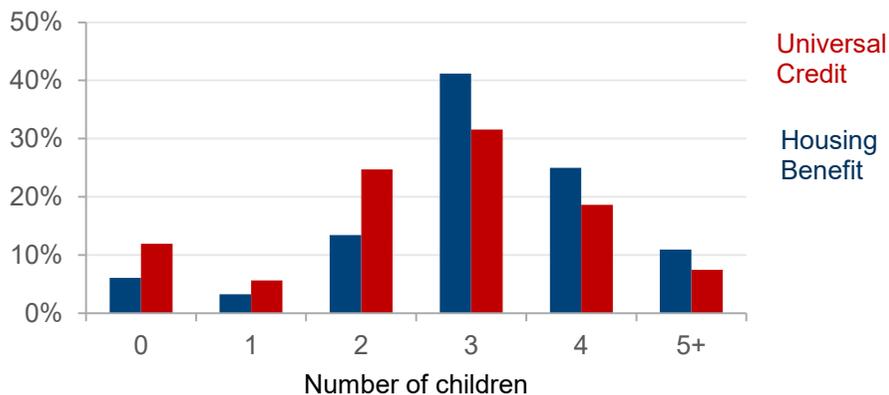
67% (38,000) of single-parent capped households have at least one child aged under 5 years, including 23% (13,000) with a child aged under 2 years at August 2019.

Single-parent capped households by age of youngest child, at August 2019



Most capped households include children

Percentage of capped households by number of children, at August 2019



At August 2019, 93% (74,000) of households that had their benefits capped include children, with the figure at 94% (41,000) for Housing Benefit, and 91% (33,000) for Universal Credit. Of those capped households including children, 88% (65,000) had between 1 and 4 children and 10% (7,400) 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.

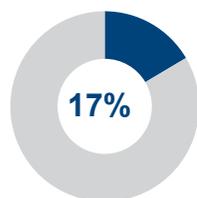
See [Data table 2](#), [Data table 9](#), [Data table 17](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data on the family make-up of capped households. See [Data table 5](#) or [Data table 15](#) for full data on the age of youngest child by family type at August 2019. [Data table 8](#) includes data on the cumulative HB cap caseload by family type and age of youngest child.

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](#). Figures on children in Universal Credit capped households are experimental, and relate to Full Service capped households only. **Statistics on children in UC households are not currently available.** More information can be found in the [Background Information and Methodology](#).

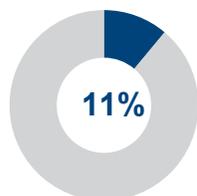
Capped Housing Benefit households claim a range of benefits

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

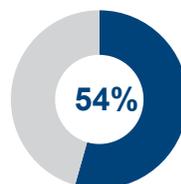
Jobseeker's Allowance



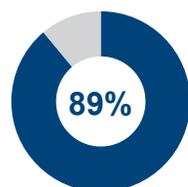
Employment and Support Allowance



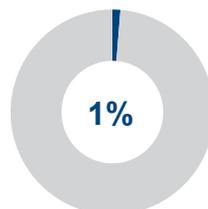
Income Support



Child Tax Credits



Housing Benefit only



At August 2019:

- 17% (7,100) of capped households were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.
- 11% (4,800) were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (Assessment Stage and Work-Related Activity Group only).
- 54% (23,000) were claiming Income Support.
- 89% (38,000) were claiming Child Tax Credits.
- 1% (640) 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.

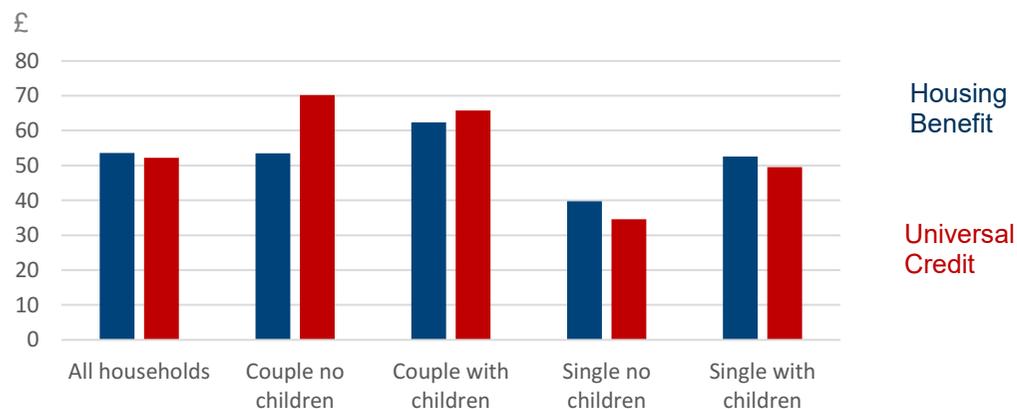
Analysis is based on benefit claims by the lead claimant in a household, and where applicable, their partner.

Equivalent information is not available for Universal Credit as Universal Credit replaces multiple benefits with just one.

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 and not just to housing costs. For these statistics, a weekly cap equivalent has been calculated for Universal Credit households. Details of the method used to create a UC weekly cap amount can be found in the [Background Information and Methodology document](#).

Households had their benefits capped by an average of £53 a week

Average weekly amount of benefit capped by family type (in £), at August 2019



The average amount that Housing Benefit is capped by at August 2019 is £54. The average weekly equivalent that Universal Credit is capped by at August 2019 is £52.

The average weekly amount of benefits capped refers to the mean amount. More information can be found in the Background and Methodology document.

At August 2019, the average weekly amount of benefit capped was £54 for households which contain children. For single parent households the average weekly cap amount was £53 for those claiming Housing Benefit, and £50 for those claiming Universal Credit. For couples with children the average weekly cap is £62, at August 2019, £65 for those claiming Housing Benefit and £66 for those claiming Universal Credit.

For full data, including by Region and Local Authority, see [Stat Xplore](#).

The difference in average cap amounts across the two benefits may be affected by the differences in their caseload compositions. The Universal Credit cap caseload contains a larger proportion of single people and smaller families, affecting the average amount that households are capped.

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.

58% of households had their HB capped by £50 or less a week

Capped households by weekly amount capped at August 2019

(Housing Benefit only)



At August 2019, 58% (25,000) of capped households had their Housing Benefit capped by £50 or less a week, with a further 28% (12,000) of households capped by £50 to £100 per week.

1.7% (740) of capped households had their Housing Benefit capped by more than £200 a week at August 2019, including 0.4% (190) 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.

62% of households had their UC capped by the equivalent of £50 or less a week

Capped households by weekly equivalent amount capped at August 2019

(Universal Credit only)



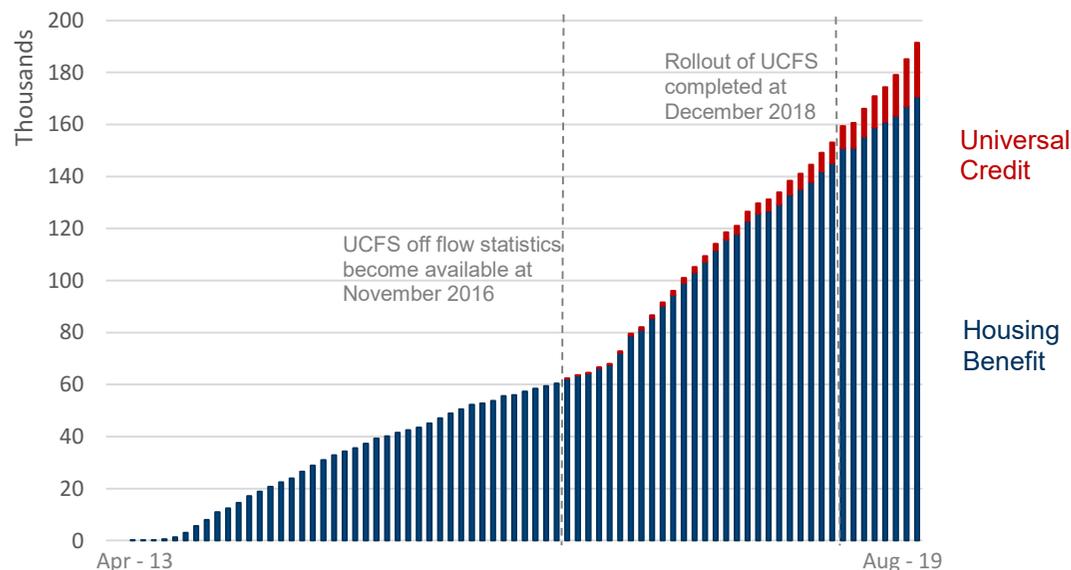
At August 2019, 62% (23,000) of households that had their Universal Credit capped were capped by the equivalent of £50 or less a week, with a further 24% (8,500) of households capped by the equivalent of £50 to £100 per week.

2.3% (820) of capped households had their Universal Credit capped by the equivalent of £200 or more a week at August 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**.

190,000 households who had their benefits capped previously are no longer capped at August 2019

Total off flows from the benefit cap at each month, by Benefit under which household was last capped, April 2013 to August 2019



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

190,000 households who had their benefits capped at some point between 15 April 2013 and July 2019, were no longer capped at August 2019. This is an increase of 12,000 from last quarter, at May 2019.

26,000 (42%) households who once had their Universal Credit capped were no longer capped at August 2019, an increase of 8,900 since last quarter. Of the households who have had their Housing Benefit capped, 170,000 (80%) had left the Housing Benefit cap at August 2019.

See [Data table 4](#), [Data table 16](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

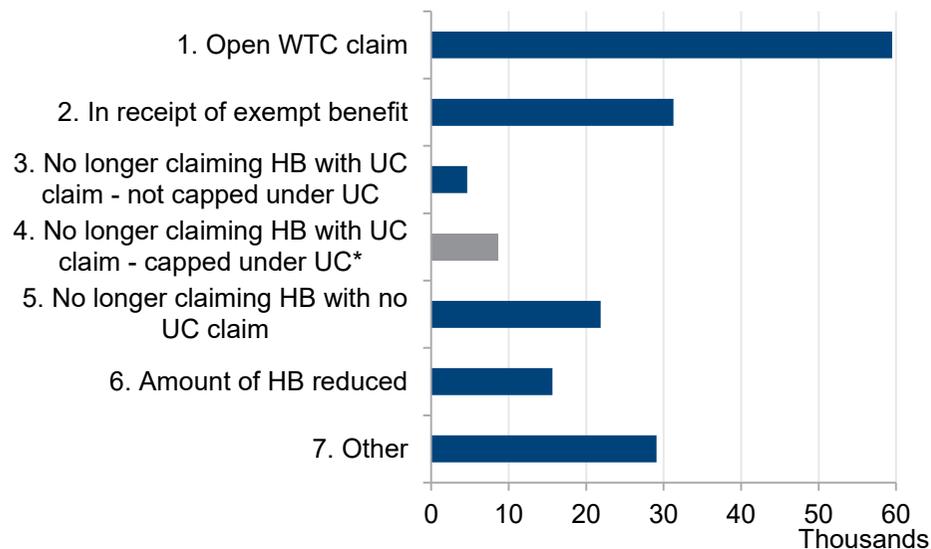
Off-flow statistics for capped households are not directly comparable with previous statistics, due to developments in the production of the statistics. From 1 August, households whose outcome for leaving the HB cap had been to move to UC are now divided into those who have moved to UC and are capped, and those who are no longer capped under UC. Due to this, total off flow figures do not include households who move from being capped under HB to being capped under UC, although these would count as households leaving the HB cap. In order to be counted as an off flow from the cap a household must no longer be capped on either benefit.

Off flow statistics for UCFS are only available from November 2016, when robust off flow data became available.

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.

35% of all households that previously had their Housing Benefit capped moved off the Housing Benefit cap with an open Working Tax Credit claim

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



80% (170,000) of households that have had their Housing Benefit capped prior to May 2019, no longer have Housing Benefit capped at August 2019. This is an increase of 8,800 households on the previous quarter (May 2019).

Of the 170,000 households that no longer had their Housing Benefit capped at May 2019, 59,000 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 35% of those no longer capped.

13,000 (8%) households that no longer had their Housing Benefit capped at August 2019 were no longer claiming Housing Benefit when they moved off the cap but had started to claim Universal Credit (UC). Of these, 4,700 (35%) were no longer capped after moving to UC.

For illustration purposes and consistency with previous releases, we have included households which have flowed from HB on to the UC cap.

See [Data table 4](#) for full data.

Households can flow off the cap for many different reasons and there may be several reasons why a household is no longer capped.

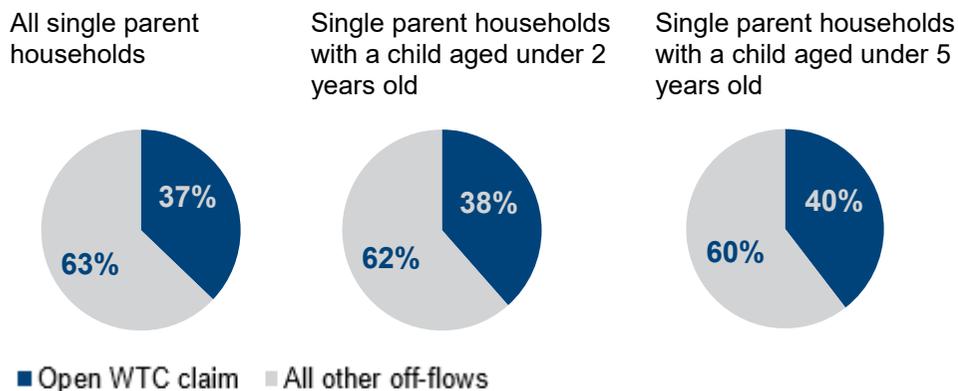
More Information

There may be several reasons why a household is no longer capped. These reasons are ranked (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](#).

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](#).

37% of single parent households who no longer have their Housing Benefit capped left the cap with an open Working Tax Credit claim

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



For single parent households with a child aged under 2 years, 76% (23,000) who have at some point had their Housing Benefit capped no longer have Housing Benefit capped at August 2019. Of these, 38% (9,000) 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, 71% (61,000) of those who have previously had their Housing Benefit capped no longer have Housing Benefit capped at August 2019. Of these, 40% (24,000) 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

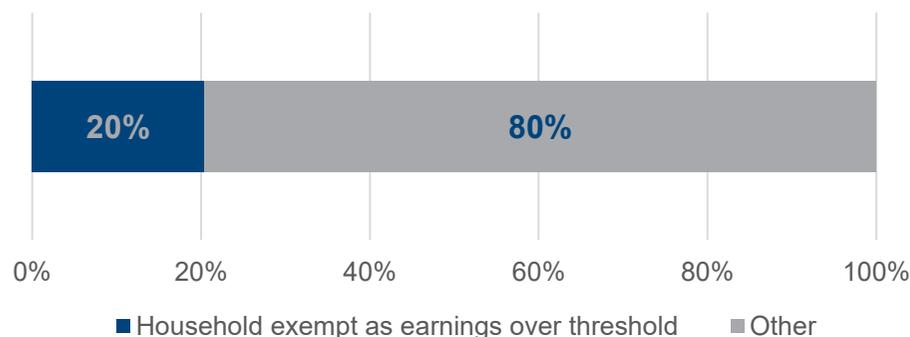
There may be several reasons why a household is no longer capped. These reasons are ranked (as in the chart on page 11) and only the top-most reason that is applicable to each household is counted. More information on how the ranking was developed and is applied is in the [Background Information and 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](#).

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](#). Figures on children in Universal Credit capped households are experimental, and relate to Full Service capped households only. Statistics on children in UC households are not currently available. More information can be found in the [Background Information and Methodology](#).

20% of all households that previously had their UC capped moved off the cap because of earnings

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



42% (26,000) of households that have ever had their Universal Credit capped are no longer capped at August 2019.

Of the 26,000 households that no longer had their Universal Credit capped at August 2019, 20% (5,300) became exempt as they were earning more than the threshold at which households become exempt from the benefit cap.

The earnings exemption threshold is subject to change each financial year. At the financial year 2019/20 the earnings exemption threshold is set at £569 per assessment period. Details of previous exemption threshold levels can be found in the [Background Information and Methodology document](#).

See [Data table 16](#) for full data broken down by Region.

More Information

Outcome statistics for households no longer capped under UC are still under development and are not comparable with statistics for outcomes of those who are no longer capped under HB. Comparable figures on outcomes related to moving into work are difficult because exemption from the Housing Benefit cap is linked to hours worked (a household becomes exempt from the cap if they claim Working Tax Credits) and for Universal Credit is linked to earnings (a household becomes exempt from the cap when their earnings exceed the earnings exemption threshold). For the year 2019/20 the earnings exemption threshold is set at £569 per assessment period. For these reasons, outcome figures are presented here for households no longer capped for HB and UC separately.

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.

About these statistics

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 quarterly Housing Benefit cap statistics. From August 2019 we publish additional information on households which have their Universal Credit capped, including the number of children in these households. We are also able to identify whether households who move from HB to UC then have their UC capped.

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 planning to develop further off-flow statistics 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.

Please note, all tables are based on Local Authority information correct for the 2018/19 financial year, and not the new merged Local Authorities. This is because a fix to link geography information to Local Authorities created in the April 2019 merges, has not yet been finalised. For this publication, data from Suffolk Coastal, Waveney, Forest Heath, and St. Edmundsbury will appear as unknown Local Authority/Region.

The number of children and 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.

The number of children and age of the youngest child dependant in a household is calculated by merging data held on HMRC child benefit systems to data on Universal Credit capped households. This detail is available for capped households only, and not the Universal Credit caseload.

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 previous “February 2019” data shown last quarter was typically 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](#). From August 2019 comparable data for UC capped households has been published for first time.

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. The judgement was handed down on 15 May 2019, with the court again finding in the Government's favour. The ruling is available [here](#).

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-august-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://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/metadata/dashboards/bc/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 for households who have their benefits capped in Northern Ireland can be found here: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/benefit-cap-statistics>

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>

Contact us

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Comments? Feedback is welcome