

Experimental Statistics - 30th October 2019

There is a limit on the total amount of benefit that people aged 16 to 64 can get<sup>1</sup>. This is called the Benefit Cap. The main objective of the policy is to restrict the amount of welfare support a household can receive to reflect the average take-home pay of working households. In June 2016 the benefit cap was introduced at £26,000 a year for couples and households with children and £18,200 a year for single people without children. In November 2016 these thresholds were lowered to £20,000 and £13,400 respectively.

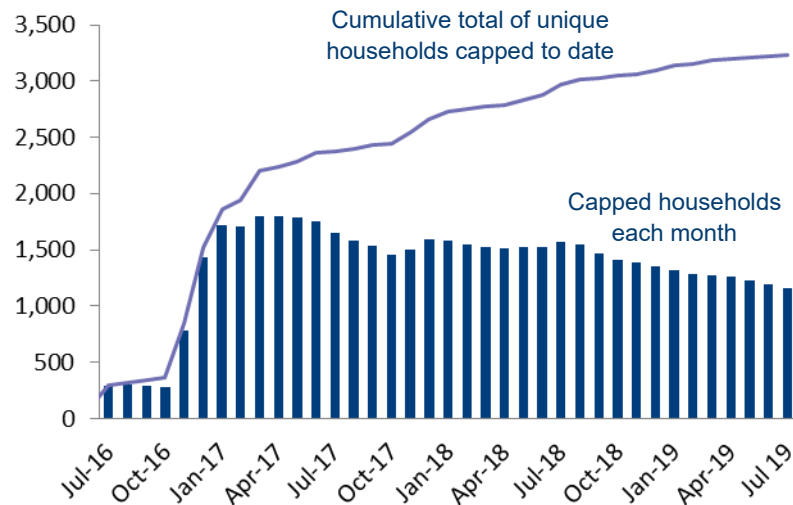
## Main Stories

**3,230 households have had their benefits capped from when the cap was introduced in June 2016 to July 2019.**

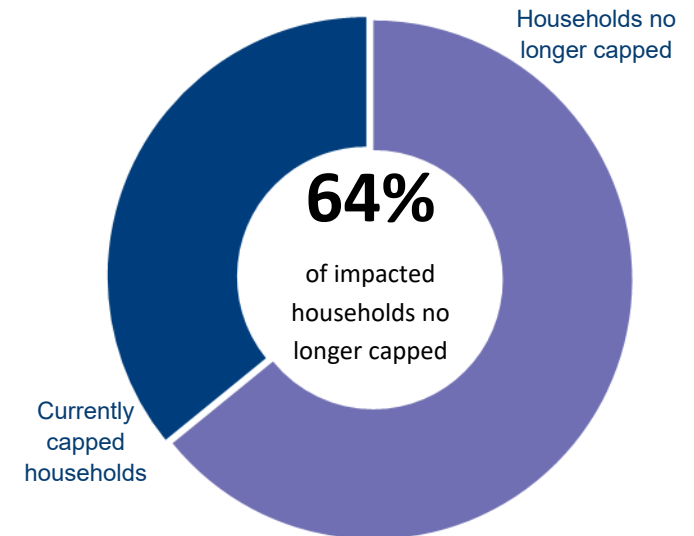
**1,160 households capped at July 2019.**

**Average amount capped at July 2019.**

**2,070 previously capped households no longer capped at July 2019.**



**£47  
Per  
Week**



<sup>1</sup>There are a number of benefits which exempt households from having their total amount of benefit limited in this way. These exemptions are listed on page 2.

## At a Glance

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NIBenefitCapStatistics/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/NIBenefitCapStatistics/)

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## What You Need to Know

### What is the Benefit Cap?

The Benefit Cap limits a working-age household's benefit income to:  
£384.62 a week for couples (with or without children living with them) and single parents whose children live with them.  
£257.69 a week for single adults without children, or whose children do not live with them.

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);  
Child Benefit;  
Child Tax Credit;  
Housing Benefit;  
Universal Credit;  
Other benefits such as Incapacity Benefit and Bereavement Allowance.

You are not affected by the cap if you or your partner are in work or in receipt of an exempt benefit.

Exemptions from the cap include:

Carer's Allowance  
Disability Living Allowance or its replacement Personal Independence Payment  
Employment and Support Allowance (support component)  
Working Tax Credit  
Other benefits such as Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments  
Exemptions such as DLA/PIP also apply if received by other members of the household.

For most capped households the Benefit Cap is applied by reducing the amount of Housing Benefit 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). Phased roll out of UC began on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017 in Northern Ireland. At May 2019, there were 140 households capped through UC. These households have not been included in this report. A further edition of this publication will be released on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019 which will include statistics on those capped through UC.

### How is it measured?

The main source of Benefit Cap data is the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Housing Benefit data. Data on households who have (previously) been capped that are no longer capped is linked to the Department for Communities (DfC) benefits data to determine why households are no longer capped.

This report contains 3 measures:

**Point-in-time caseload** counts the number of capped households each month.

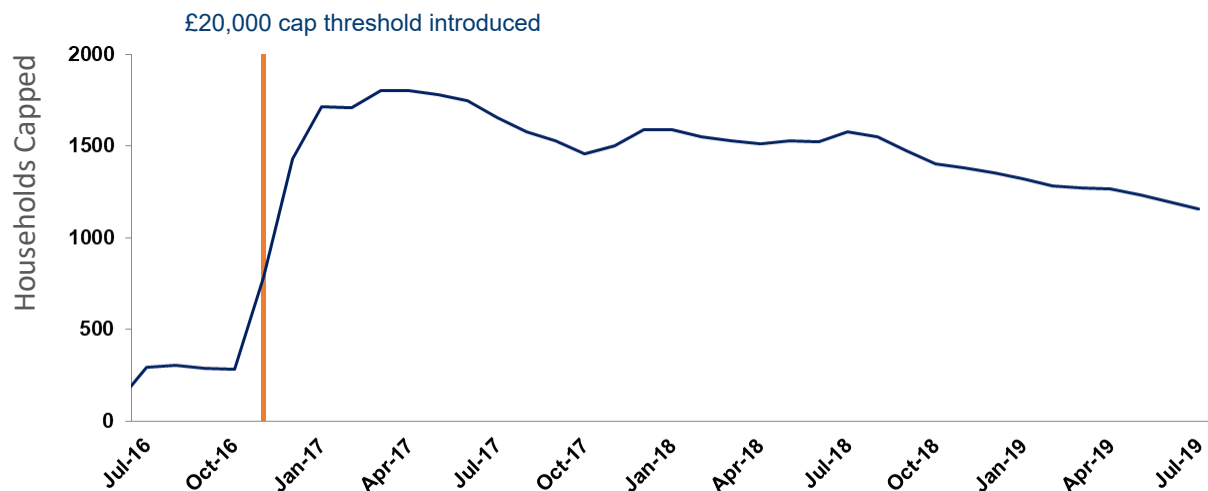
**Cumulative caseload** counts the overall number of unique households that have been capped from the introduction of the Benefit Cap to the latest month available.

**Off-flows** is the difference between the two caseload figures, and shows the number of previously capped households no longer capped at the latest month available. It does not include households who have moved off the cap and back on through that period.

## Number of Capped Households

The number of capped households at each month rose after the introduction of the £20,000 threshold in November 2016. The number of capped households reached a peak of 1,800 in April 2017. Since this time there has been a general decline in the number of capped households, and is now at its lowest level since the £20,000 threshold was introduced.

**Point-in-time Capped Households - June 2016 to July 2019.**

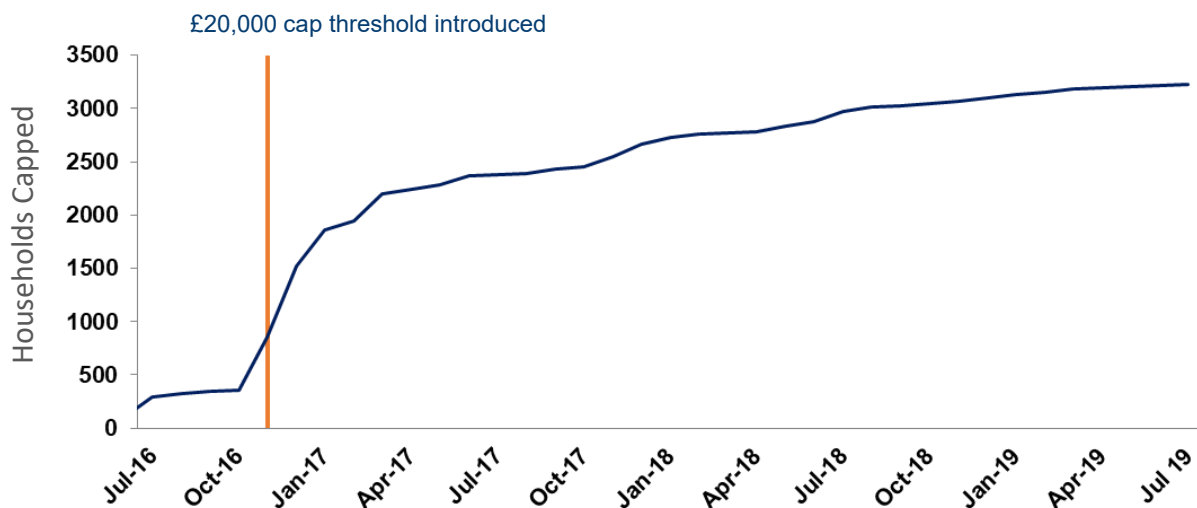


The Benefit Cap was introduced in June 2016 in Northern Ireland with a threshold of £26,000.

The £20,000 threshold was introduced in November 2016.

1,160 households had their Housing Benefit capped in July 2019.

**Cumulative Total Capped Households to July 2019.**



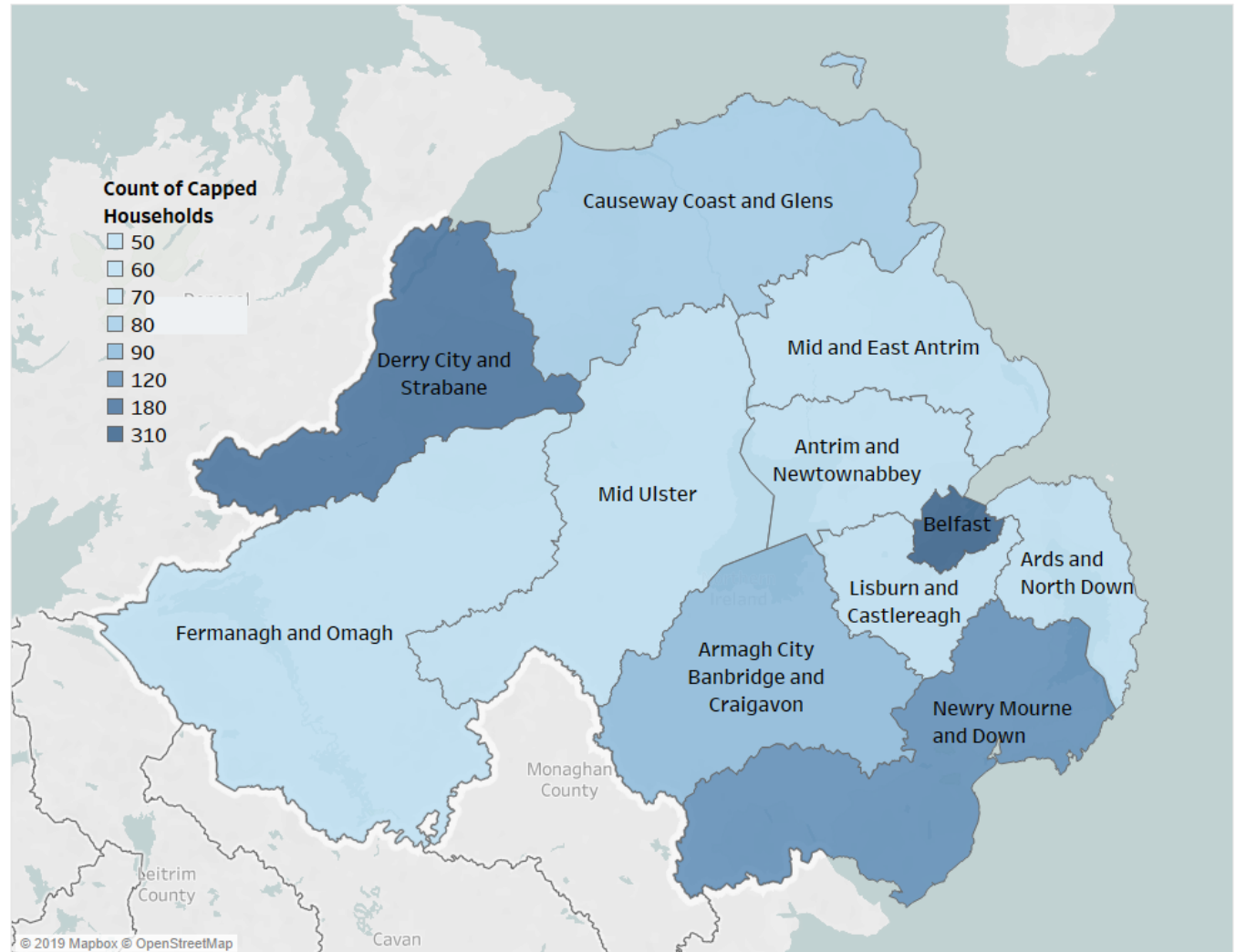
The cumulative caseload of households that have had their Housing Benefit capped since the introduction of the Benefit Cap continued to rise over the last quarter to 3,230. This shows that new households continue to be capped.

# Where Capped Households are Located

Belfast has the most capped households with 27% of the NI total (at July 2019) in the Belfast Local Government District (LGD).

**Capped Households by Local Government District - July 2019.**

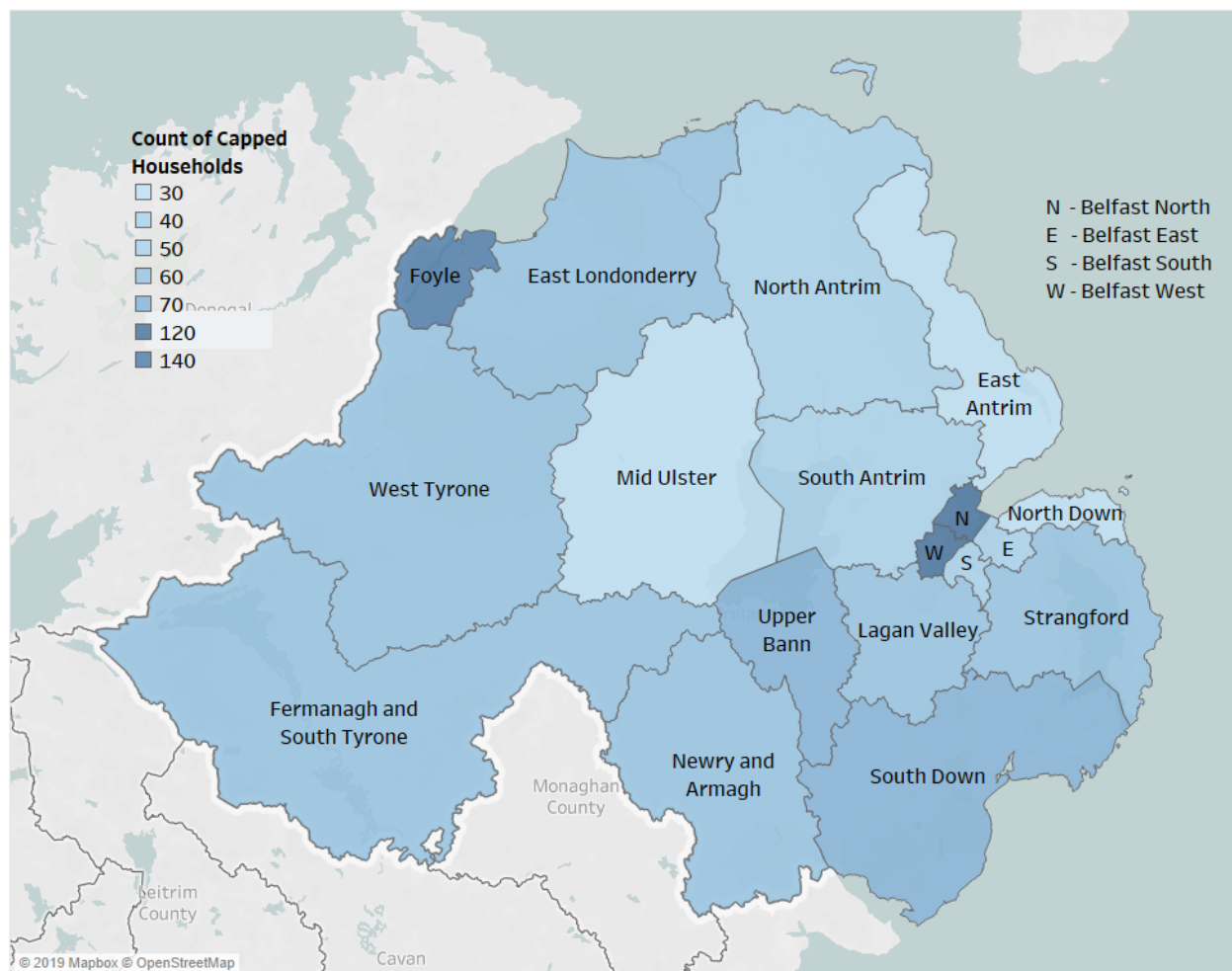
Local Government District	No of Households Capped
Belfast	310
Derry City and Strabane	180
Newry, Mourne and Down	120
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	90
Causeway Coast and Glens	80
Antrim and Newtownabbey	70
Ards and North Down	70
Lisburn and Castlereagh	70
Mid and East Antrim	60
Fermanagh and Omagh	50
Mid Ulster	50
Unknown	*
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,160</b>



# Where Capped Households are Located

Capped Households by NI Assembly Area - July 2019.

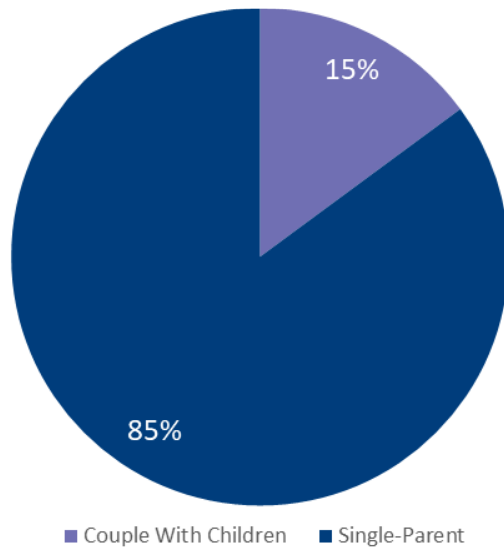
NI Assembly Area	No of Households Capped
Foyle	140
Belfast North	120
Belfast West	120
South Down	70
Upper Bann	70
East Londonderry	60
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	60
Lagan Valley	60
Newry and Armagh	60
Strangford	60
West Tyrone	60
Belfast East	50
Belfast South	50
North Antrim	50
South Antrim	40
East Antrim	30
Mid Ulster	30
North Down	30
Unknown	*
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,160</b>



## More information

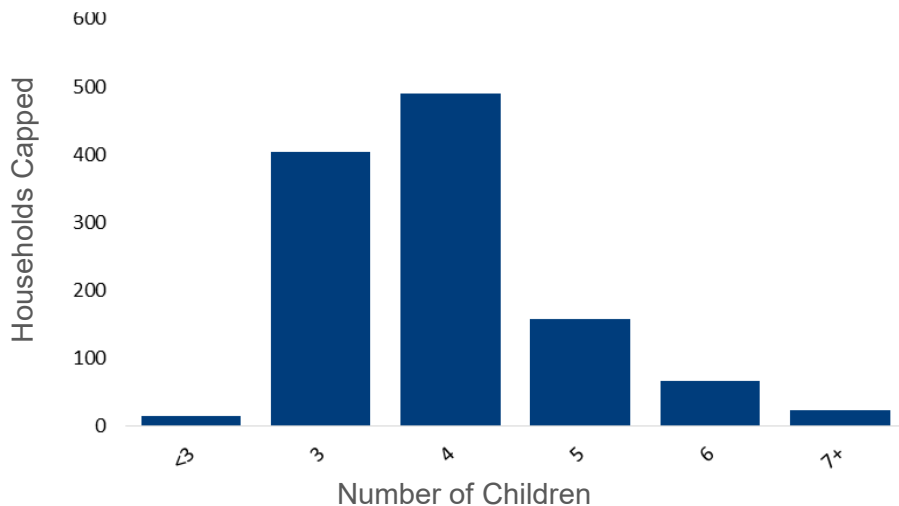
The Local Government District and NI Assembly Area reflects the initial areas in which the cap was applied to households.

# The Family Make-up of Capped Households



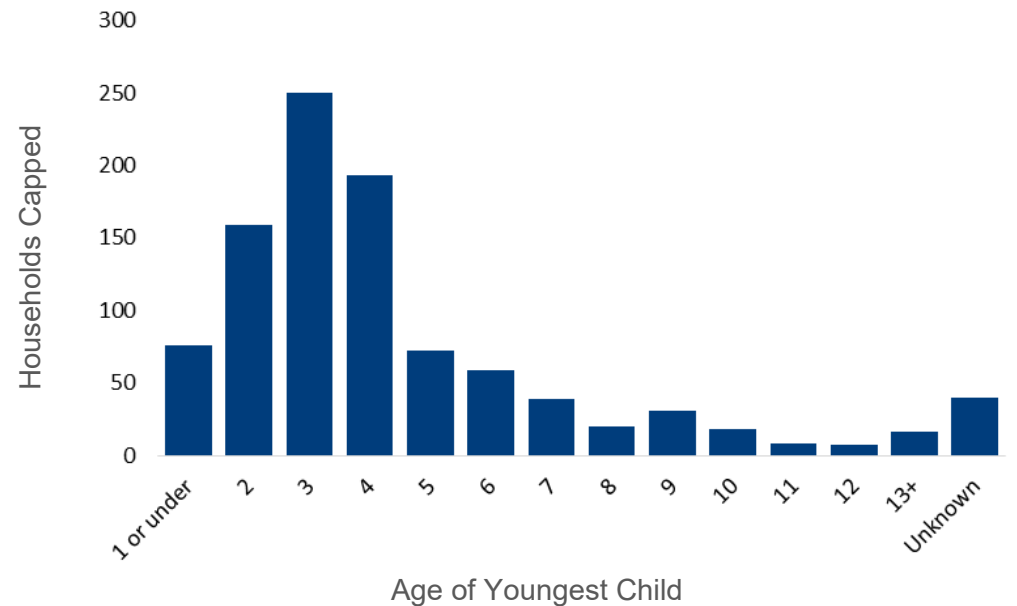
\*There were less than 10 households with no children

**Number of Capped Households by Number of Children at July 2019.**



69% (680) of single-parent capped households had at least one child under the age of 5.

**Single-Parent Capped Households by Age of Youngest Child, at July 2019.**

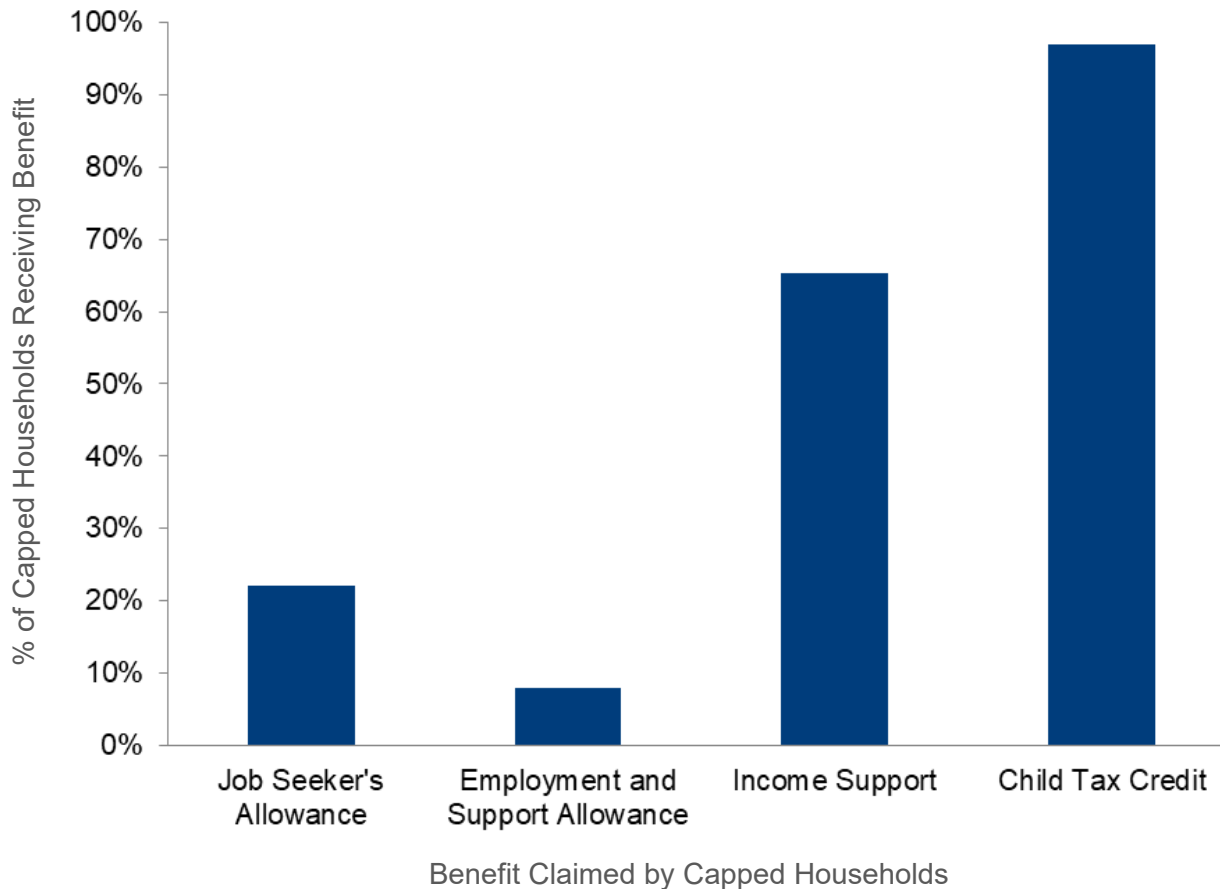


At July 2019, 22% (250) of capped households had 5 or more children while 78% (910) had between 2 and 4 children. There were less than 10 capped households with 1 or no children at July 2019.

Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits are both included in the benefit cap, so families with more children, in receipt of higher amounts of these benefits are more likely to be capped.

# Benefits Claimed by Capped Households

Capped Households by Benefit Take-Up July 2019.



In July 2019:

22% of capped households were on Jobseekers Allowance (JSA).

8% were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (Assessment Stage and Work-Related Activity Group only) (ESA).

65% were claiming Income Support (IS).

97% were claiming Child Tax Credit (CTC).

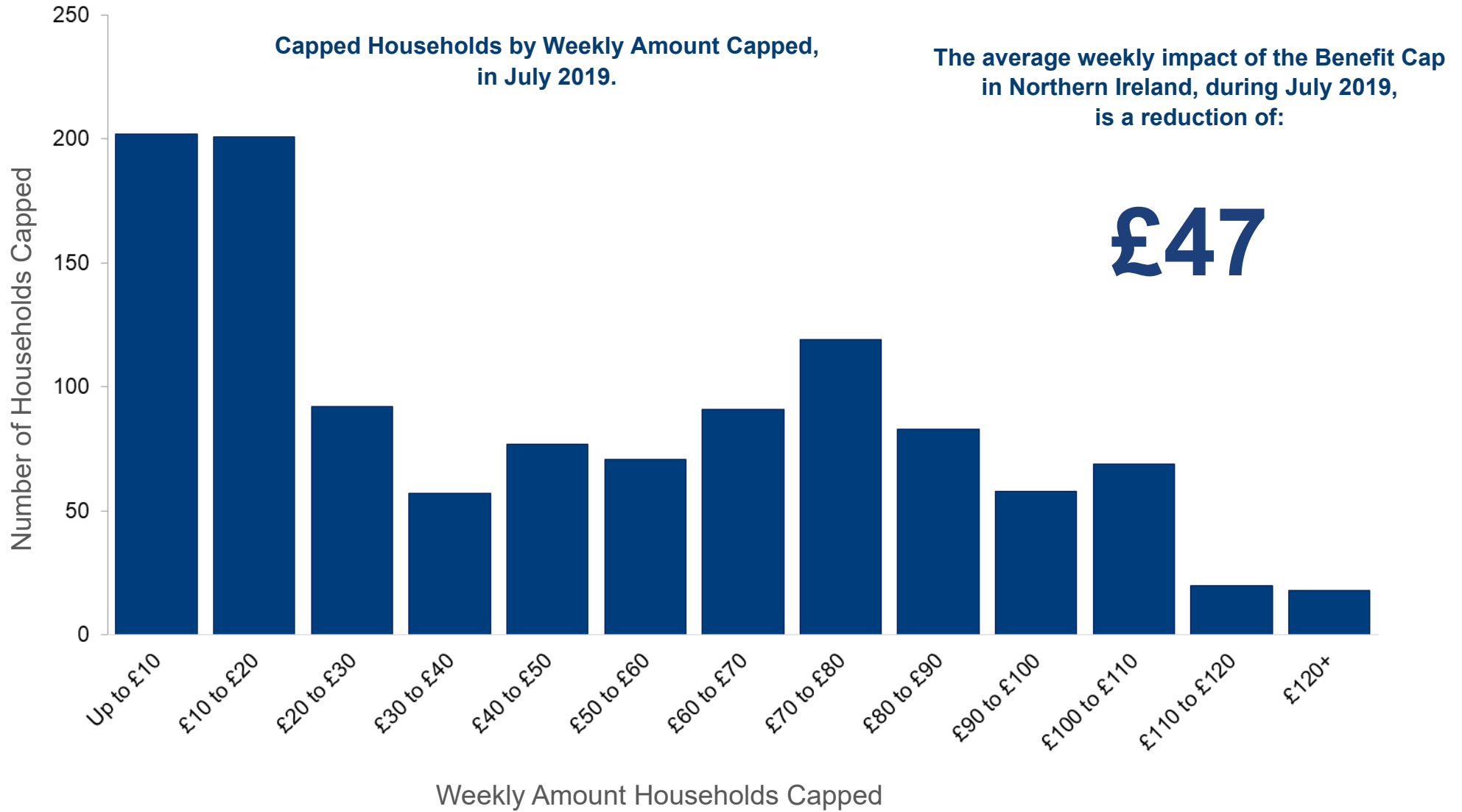
## More Information

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%.

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

# The Financial Impact of Being Capped

54% (630) of capped households were capped by less than £50 per week.

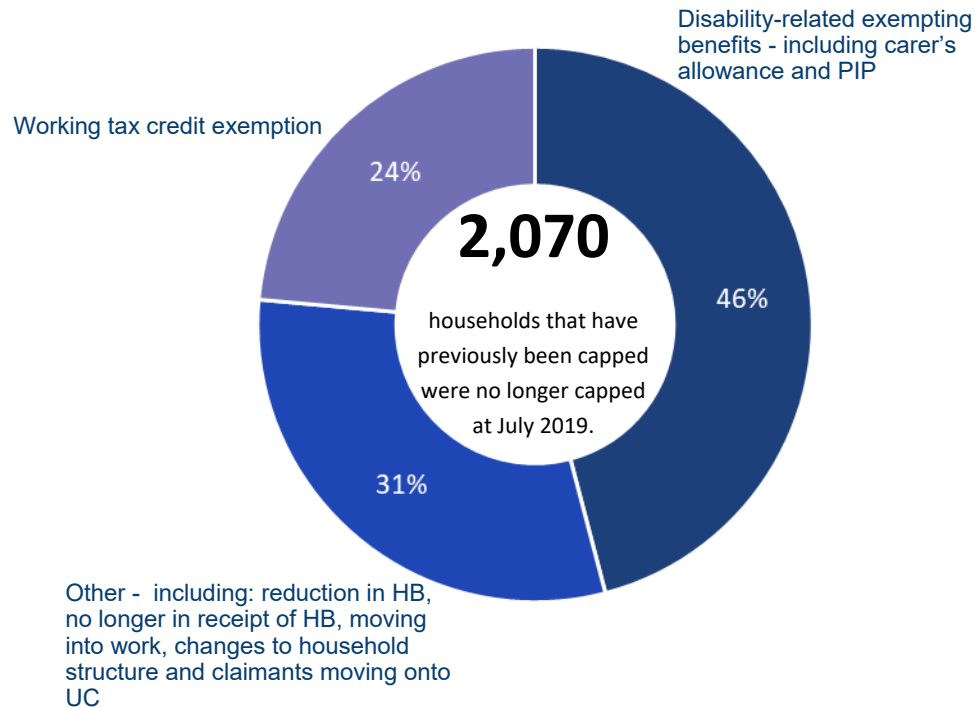




# Moving Off the Cap

64% (2,070) of households that have previously been capped were no longer capped at July 2019.

## Off-Flows From the Cap by Household Outcome, at July 2019.



### More Information

The reason a household is no longer capped may change after a household has moved off the cap. This chart shows this reason as at July 2019. There may be a number of reasons why a household is no longer capped but only a single reason is shown.

If a claimant moves into work and receives Working Tax Credit (WTC) they become exempt from the cap. This is one of the main reasons in Great Britain for cases flowing off the cap. However in Northern Ireland the majority of claimants are receiving mitigation payments under the Fresh Start Agreement which make up for the reduction in Housing Benefit due to the application of the Benefit Cap, so the same financial incentive to enter work does not exist.

The NI Executive committed to delivering welfare mitigation payments, which will run until 31 March 2020, for eligible claimants as detailed in the Fresh Start Agreement. All eligible claimants who are continuously affected by the Benefit Cap will receive a mitigation payment until 31 March 2020.

Households may also become exempt if they made a successful claim for a disability-related exempting benefit such as Carer's Allowance (CA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Almost half (46%) of households who have moved off the cap as at July 2019 were receiving disability-related exempting benefits.

It is difficult to track every other reason for claimants moving off the cap with the administrative data available. Many cases simply flow off the data and it is not possible to tell what changed in the household circumstances to cause this, as they are no longer on the administrative data.

However, some potential reasons could include: cases moving to different accommodation leading to a change in Housing Benefit award size, a child leaving or joining a household causing benefits to be re-calculated, a partner leaving or joining a household causing benefits to be re-calculated and any other change of circumstance that leads to the benefit income of the household reducing below the cap threshold.

## About These Statistics

The Benefit Cap was introduced in Northern Ireland on 31st May 2016 at the £26,000 per annum threshold for couples and households with children and £18,200 per annum for single people without children. On 7th November 2016 these thresholds were lowered to £20,000 per annum and £13,400 per annum respectively.

This summary contains experimental statistics on the number of households capped since the introduction of the Benefit Cap. It examines key features of these households in terms of amount capped, number of children and family type broken down by local government district and assembly area. The benefits claimed by capped households and the destination of off-flows from the Benefit Cap have also been examined.

The main source of Benefit Cap data published here is the NIHE Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE). This is merged with DfC benefit scans to give data on the types of benefits claimed by capped households and also the age and number of dependents. SHBE is merged with DfC benefit scans to provide information on the outcomes of households that have off-flowed from the Benefit Cap. The Benefit Cap is mainly administered through a reduction in Housing Benefit. However, administration of the Cap can also occur through a reduction of Universal Credit payments as the roll-out of the Universal Credit policy is extended to eligible households throughout Northern Ireland. At May 2019, there were 140 households capped through UC. These households have not been included in this report. A further edition of this publication will be released in November 2019 which will include statistics on those capped through UC.

### Data Quality Statement

These statistics are in an experimental stage and as such are subject to retrospective revision in any future releases.

The methodology for gathering these statistics is still in development and is also in the process of being quality assured. The methodology may change, leading to a revision of the figures contained within.

### Definitions

**Point-in-Time Caseload:** The number of households capped at each month from the introduction of the Benefit Cap (on 31 May 2016) to July 2019.

**Off-Flows by Outcome:** The number of households who have previously been capped but are no longer subject to the cap in July 2019.

### Further Information

For more information on Benefit Cap statistics, including detailed tables, please visit <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/benefit-cap-statistics>

Alternatively, contact DfC Analytical Services Unit at [catherine.murdock@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.murdock@communities-ni.gov.uk)

We would appreciate if you completed a short questionnaire to give us your views on the publication.

An online version of this questionnaire is available at the following link:

<http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/NIBenefitCapStatistics/>

For more information on Benefit Cap in general, please visit:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/the-benefit-cap>