



Experimental Statistics - Published: 31 January 2018

There is a limit on the total amount of benefit that people aged 16 to 64 can get¹. 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 a £26,000. In November 2016 the threshold was lowered to £20,000.

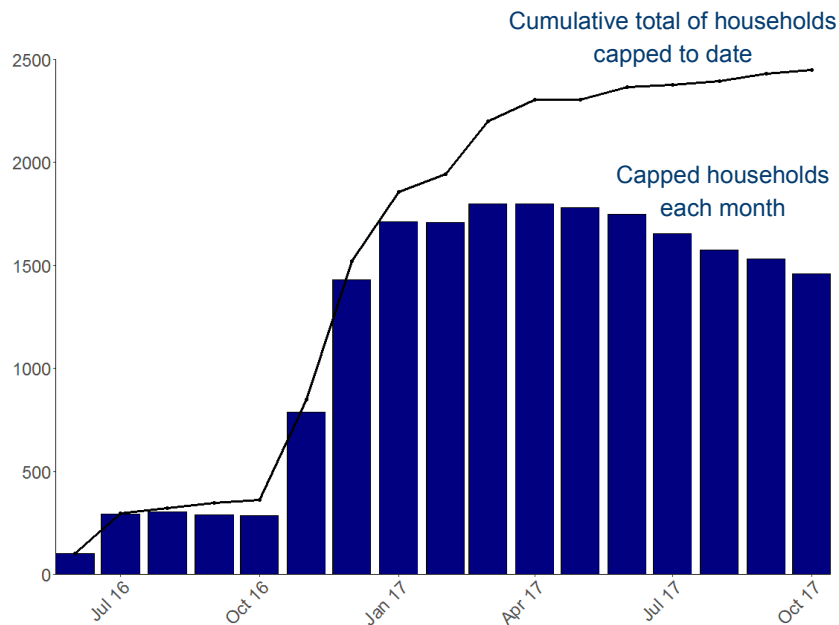
Main Stories

2,450 households have had their benefits capped from when the cap was introduced in June 2016 to October 2017,

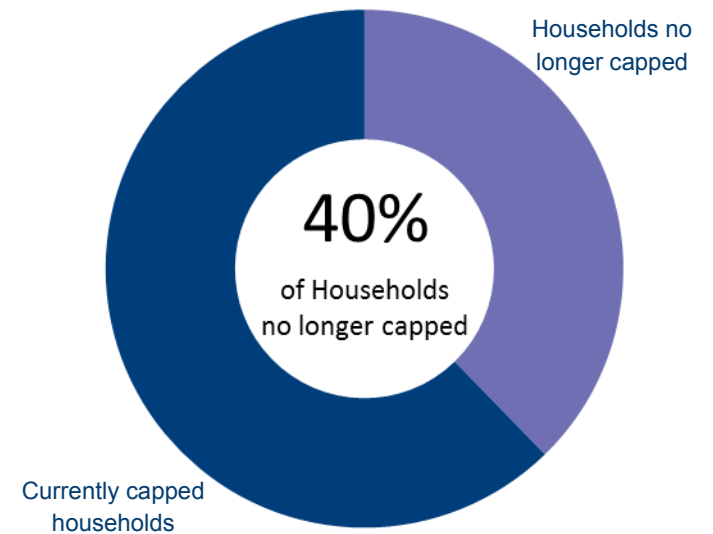
1,460 households capped at October 2017.

Average amount capped at October 2017

990 previously capped households no longer capped at October 2017



**£50
Per
Week**



¹There 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

Page

Number of capped households	3
Where capped households are	4
Family make-up	6
Benefits claimed	7
Financial impact	8
Moving off the cap	9

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Comments? Feedback is welcome
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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;
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 27th September 2017 in Northern Ireland.

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 Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and 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.

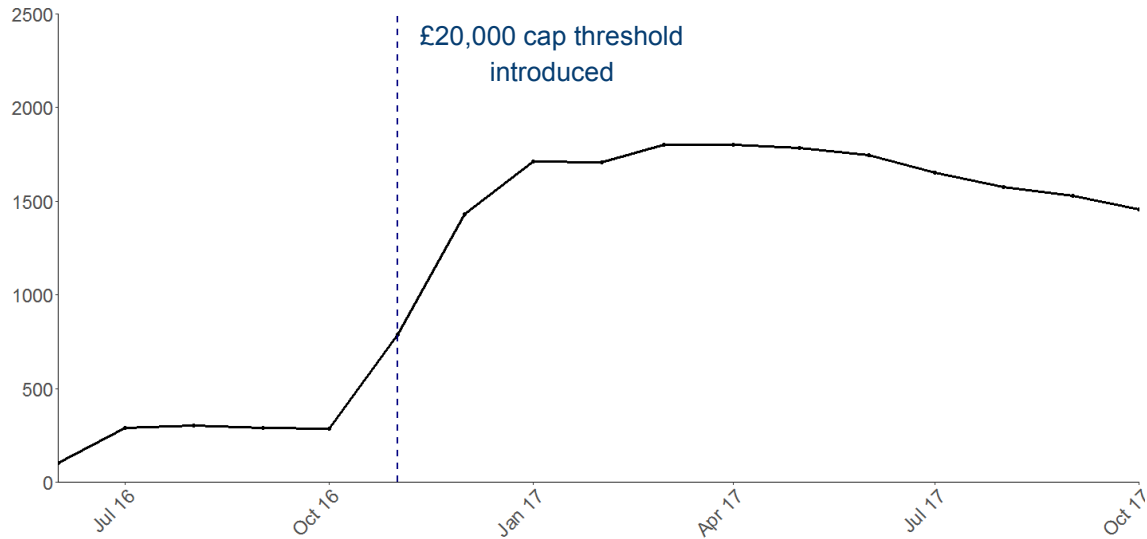
Cumulative caseload counts the overall number of households that have been capped from the introduction of the Benefit Cap to the latest month available.

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, until April 2017. Between April and October 2017 the numbers of households capped have declined.

Point-in-time capped households - June 2016 to October 2017

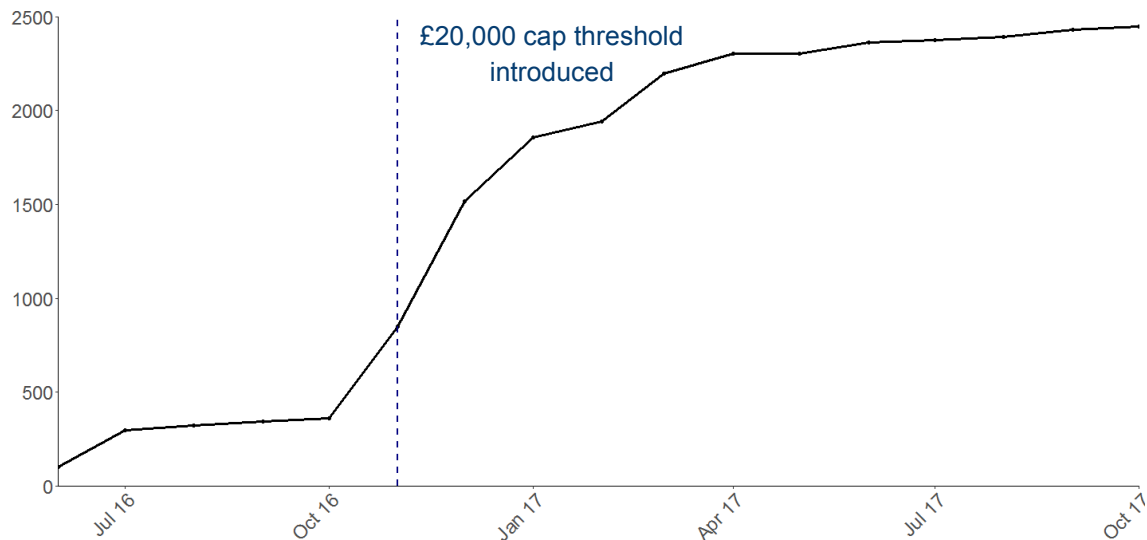


The Benefit Cap was introduced in June 2016 in Northern Ireland with a threshold of £26,000

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

1,460 households had their Housing Benefit capped in October 2017

Cumulative total capped households to October 2017



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 2,450. This shows that new households continue to be capped.

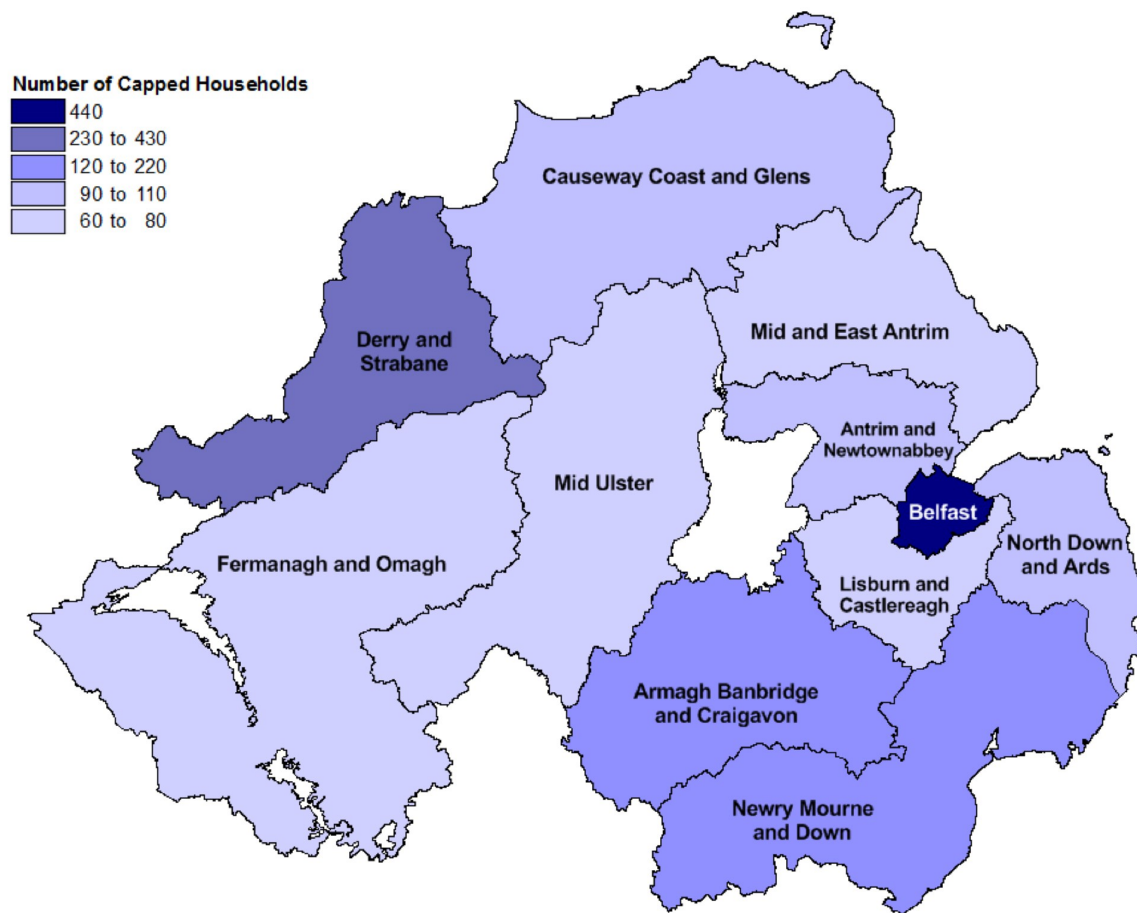
Where capped households are located

Belfast has the most capped households with 30% of the NI total (at October 2017) in the Belfast Local Government District (LGD).

Capped households by Local Government District

Map of capped households by Local Government District

Local Government District	No of Households Capped
Belfast	440
Derry City And Strabane	230
Newry, Mourne And Down	140
Armagh City, Banbridge And Craigavon	120
Antrim And Newtownabbey	90
Ards And North Down	90
Causeway Coast And Glens	90
Fermanagh And Omagh	70
Lisburn And Castlereagh	70
Mid And East Antrim	70
Mid Ulster	60
Total:	1,460

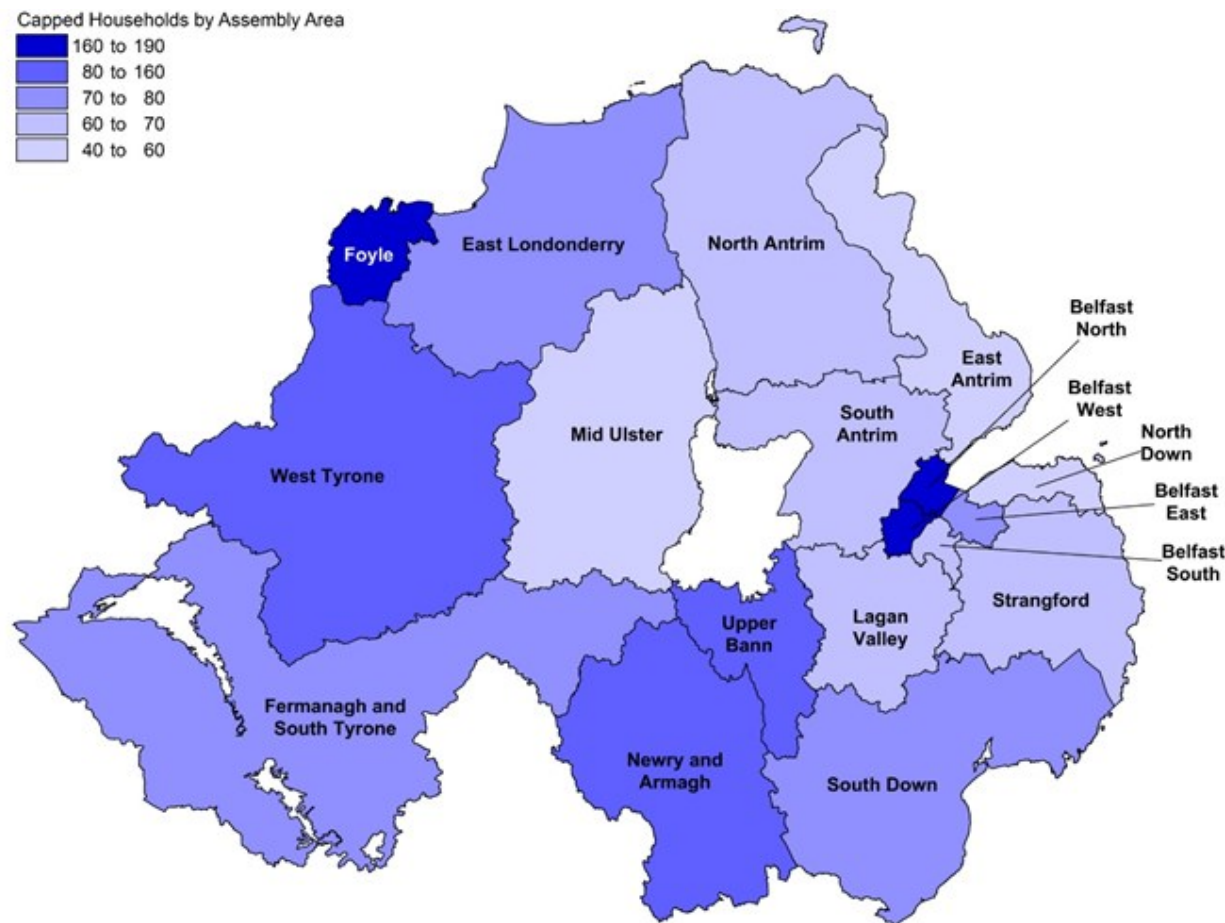


Where capped households are located

Capped households by NI Assembly Area

NI Assembly Area	No of Households Capped
Belfast West	190
Foyle	170
Belfast North	160
Upper Bann	90
Newry And Armagh	80
West Tyrone	80
Belfast East	70
East Londonderry	70
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	70
South Down	70
Belfast South	60
Lagan Valley	60
North Antrim	60
South Antrim	60
Strangford	60
East Antrim	40
Mid Ulster	40
North Down	40
Total:	1,460

Map of capped households by NI Assembly Area



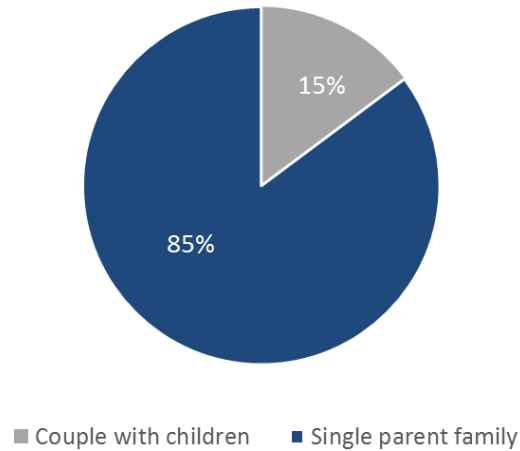
More information

The cumulative caseload is based on the lead claimant.

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

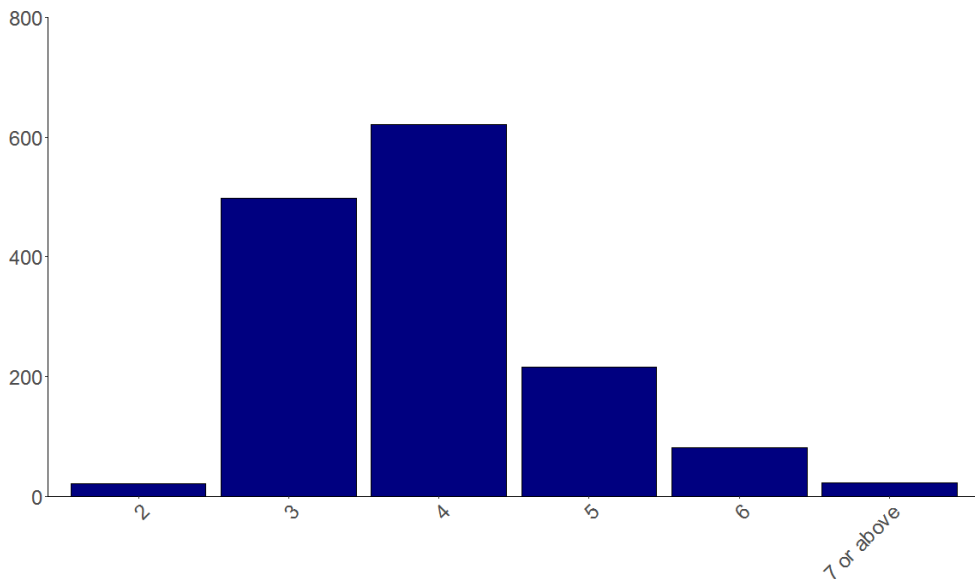
The family make-up of capped households

Percentage of capped households by family type, at October 2017



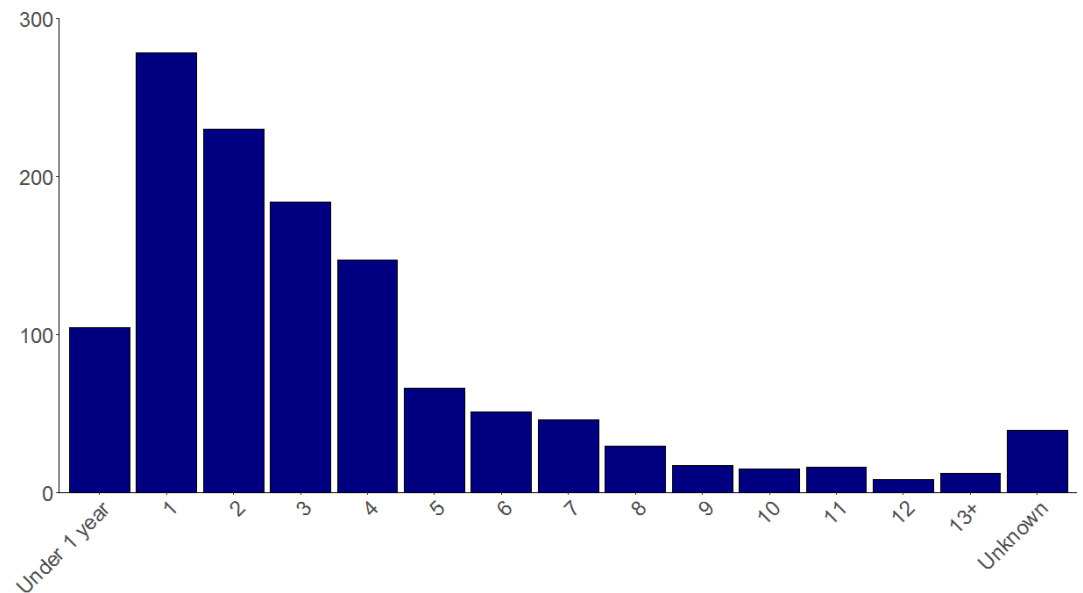
100% of capped households include children.

Number of capped households by number of children ,at October 2017



76% (940) of single-parent capped households had at least one child under the age of 5, including 8% (100) with a child aged under 1 year at October 2017.

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

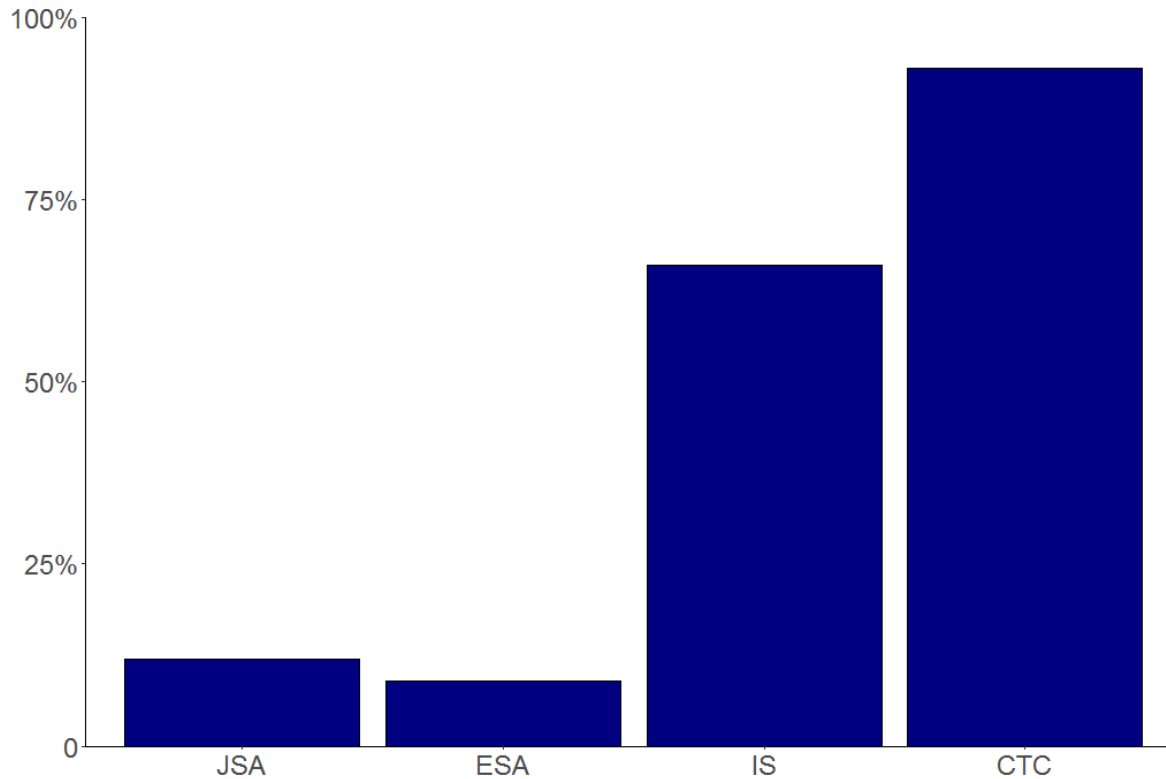


At October 2017, 22% (320) of capped households had 5 or more children while the remaining 78% (1,140) had between 1 and 4 children.

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 October 2017



In October 2017:

12% of households were on Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)

9% were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (Assessment Stage and Work-Related Activity Group only) (ESA)

66% were claiming Income Support (IS)

93% of households claimed Child Tax Credit. Child Tax Credit payments for multiple children are a major part of the benefit cap calculation (CTC)

100% of households were in receipt of Housing Benefit, as the cap is administered through Housing Benefit

100% were in receipt of Child Benefit as all households had children

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%.

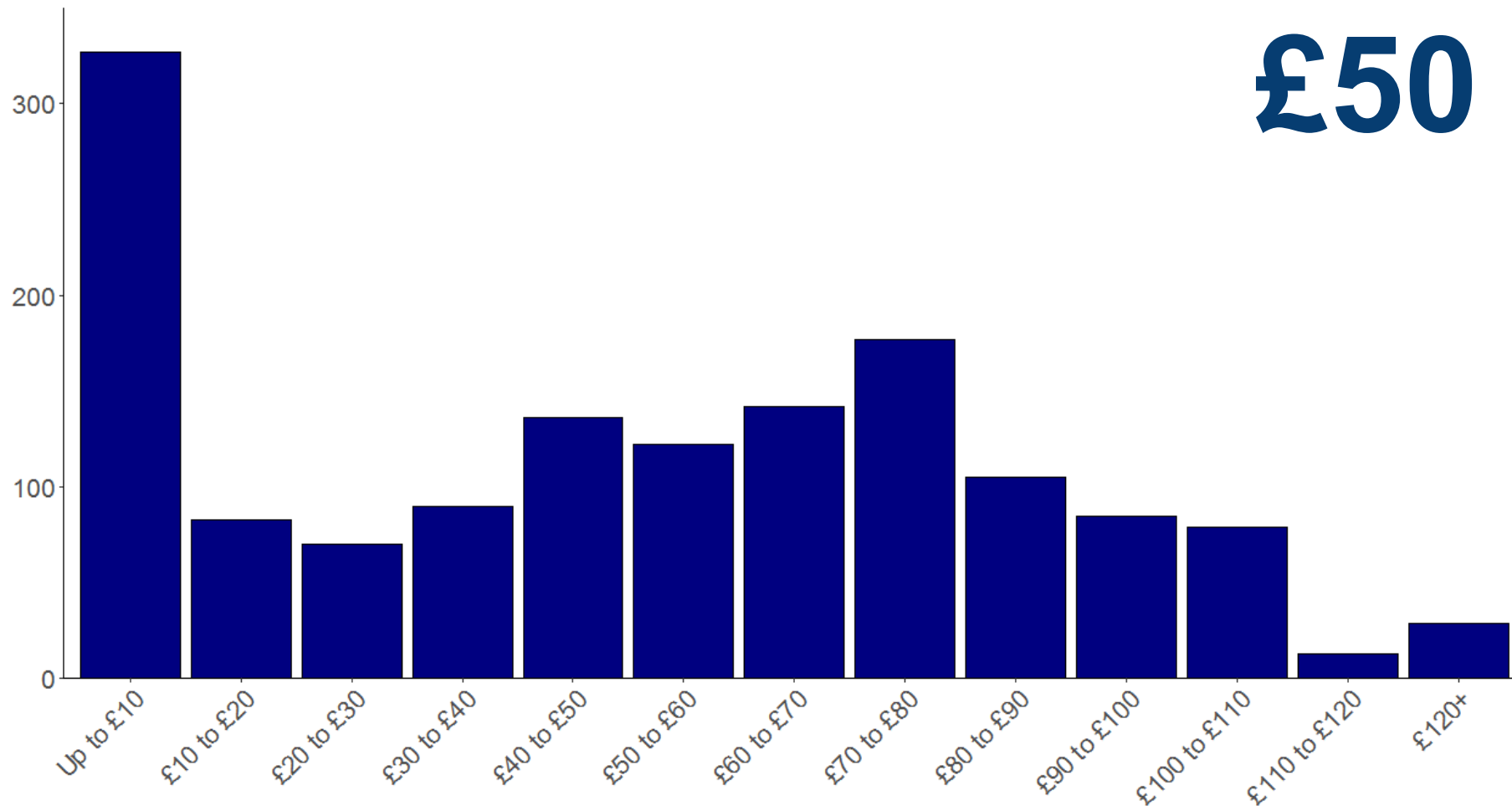
Analysis is based on benefit claims by the lead claimant in a household, and where applicable, their partner.

The financial impact of being capped

48% (710) of capped households were capped by £50 or less a week at the £20,000 threshold.

8% (120) of capped households were capped by more than £100 a week at the £20,000 threshold.

Capped households by weekly amount capped, in October 2017



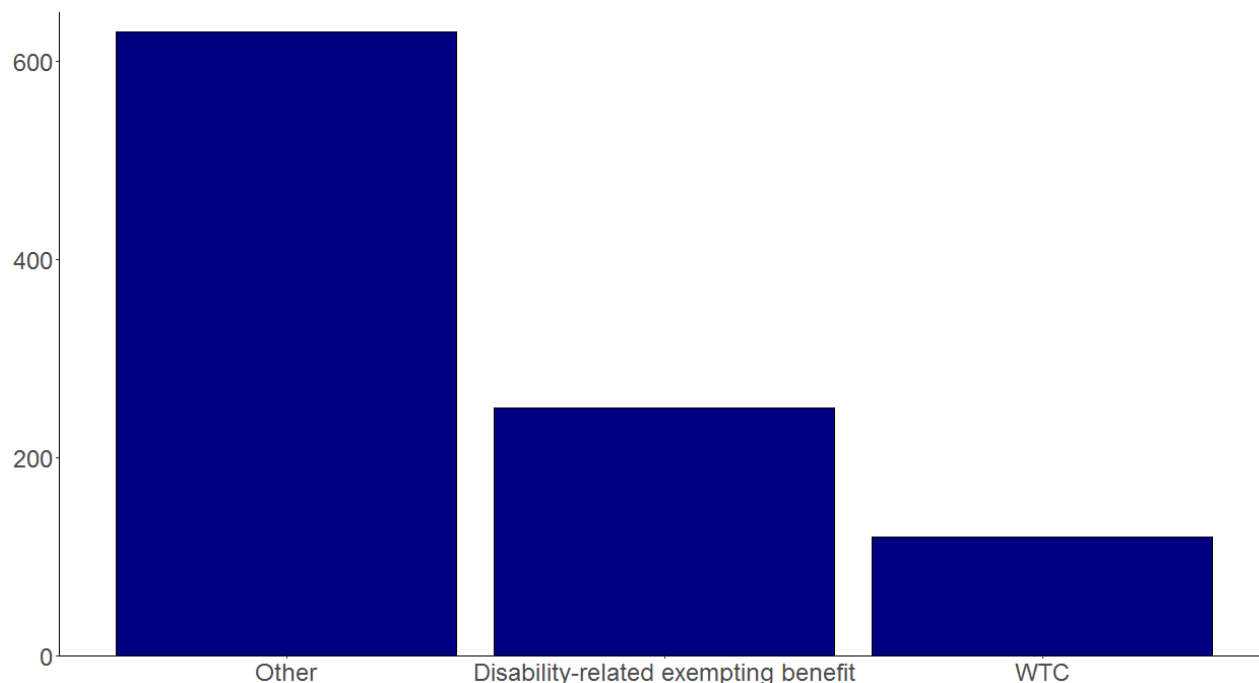
The average weekly impact of the Benefit Cap in Northern Ireland is a reduction of:

£50

Moving off the cap

40% (990) of households that have (previously) been capped are no longer capped at October 2017

Off-flows from the cap by household outcome, in October 2017



Other - including: reduction in HB, no longer in receipt of HB, and changes to household structure

Disability-related exempting benefits - including carer's allowance and PIP

WTC - in receipt of working tax credit.

More Information

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

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 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 an exempting benefit such as Carer's Allowance (CA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

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. On 7th November 2016 the threshold was lowered to £20,000 per annum.

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 and HMRC Child Tax Credit benefit scans, to give data on the types of benefits claimed by capped households, and with HMRC Child Benefit data, to give information on the age of the youngest child dependant in a capped household. SHBE is merged with HMRC Working Tax Credit data and DfC benefit scans to provide information on the outcomes of households that have off-flowed from the Benefit Cap.

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 October 2017.

Off-Flows by Outcome: The number of households who have (previously) been capped but are no longer subject to the cap in October

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 uc.asu@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>