

## Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

The Government has introduced a cap on the total amount of benefits that working-age households can receive. This means that, in general, households on out-of-work benefits no longer receive more in welfare payments than the average weekly wage for working households.

This Summary contains official statistics on capped households from 15 April 2013 (when the benefit cap was introduced) to February 2015 (the latest available figures). It includes cumulative and point-in-time figures on the number of capped households (caseload) as well as information on households who have moved off the benefit cap (off-flows).

### Main Findings:

**Cumulative measures** - Since the introduction of the benefit cap on 15 April 2013 to February 2015:

- **58.7 thousand households had their Housing Benefit capped.**
- 45% of households affected by the benefit cap were in London.
- Of the top 20 Local Authorities with the highest number of households affected by the benefit cap, only one was outside London – Birmingham.

**Snapshot measures** - Of data extracted in February 2015:

- **23.1 thousand households had their Housing Benefit capped.** This is a decrease of 1.2 thousand (5%) from 24.3 thousand households in November 2014.
- 83% of capped households were capped by £100 or less a week.
- 59% of capped households had between 1 and 4 children and 35% had 5 or more children.
- 63% of capped households constituted a single parent with child dependants.

**Off-flow measures** - Of data extracted in February 2015:

- 35.6 thousand households (61%) who have (previously) been capped are no longer subject to the cap as at February 2015. **Of these, 14.4 thousand households are exempt with an open Working Tax Credit claim, which is 41% of those no longer subject to the cap.**

### Contacts:

**Statistician:** Helen Dodsworth

Telephone: 0191 216 6138

Email: [helen.dodsworth@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helen.dodsworth@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Information Exploitation (IE) Directorate,  
Department for Work and Pensions,  
Room BP5201, Benton Park Road, Longbenton,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE98 1YX

**Press enquiries:** 0203 267 5129

**Published:** 14 May 2015

**Next publication:** 6 August 2015

### Contents:

<a href="#">Introduction</a>	2
<a href="#">Cumulative Caseload</a>	3
<a href="#">Point-in-Time Caseload</a>	5
<a href="#">Off-flows by Outcome</a>	8
<a href="#">Annex A – Administering the Benefit Cap</a>	9
<a href="#">Annex B – Methods</a>	10
<a href="#">Annex C – Data Quality</a>	12
<a href="#">Annex D – Users</a>	13
<a href="#">Annex E – User Feedback and Contacts</a>	14
<a href="#">Annex F – Further Information</a>	15

## **Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015**

### **Introduction**

The Government has introduced a cap on the total amount of benefits that working-age households can receive. This means that, in general, households in which at least one person is in receipt of a working age benefit no longer receive more in welfare payments than the average weekly wage for working households. More information on households in scope for the cap and exempt households is included in [Annex A](#).

The benefit cap was introduced from 15 April 2013 in Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey Local Authorities, with all other Local Authorities applying the cap between 15 July 2013 and the end of September 2013.

The benefit cap is administered through Housing Benefit (HB), with a household's HB entitlement being reduced so that the total amount of benefit received is no longer higher than the cap level. A household which is not in receipt of HB will not currently be in scope for the cap.

### **Methods used to compile the statistics**

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

Data on those households who have (previously) been capped that are no longer capped is linked to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and DWP benefits data to determine why households are no longer capped. Further details are included in [Annex B](#).

More information on data quality and limitations are included in [Annex C](#).

### **Further benefit cap statistics**

The content and structure of this Release has been revised to better focus on the latest key statistics and trends. The full suite of benefit cap statistics, including previous publications, can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-cap-statistics>

## **Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015**

Accompanying tables showing benefit cap statistics split by geography (down to Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency level), amount capped, number of children, household type and off-flow reason are available as either ready-made Excel tables or as bespoke tables in Stat-Xplore, DWP's online interactive tabulation tool. More information on Stat-Xplore can be accessed here:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Further details on our users are included in [Annex D](#).

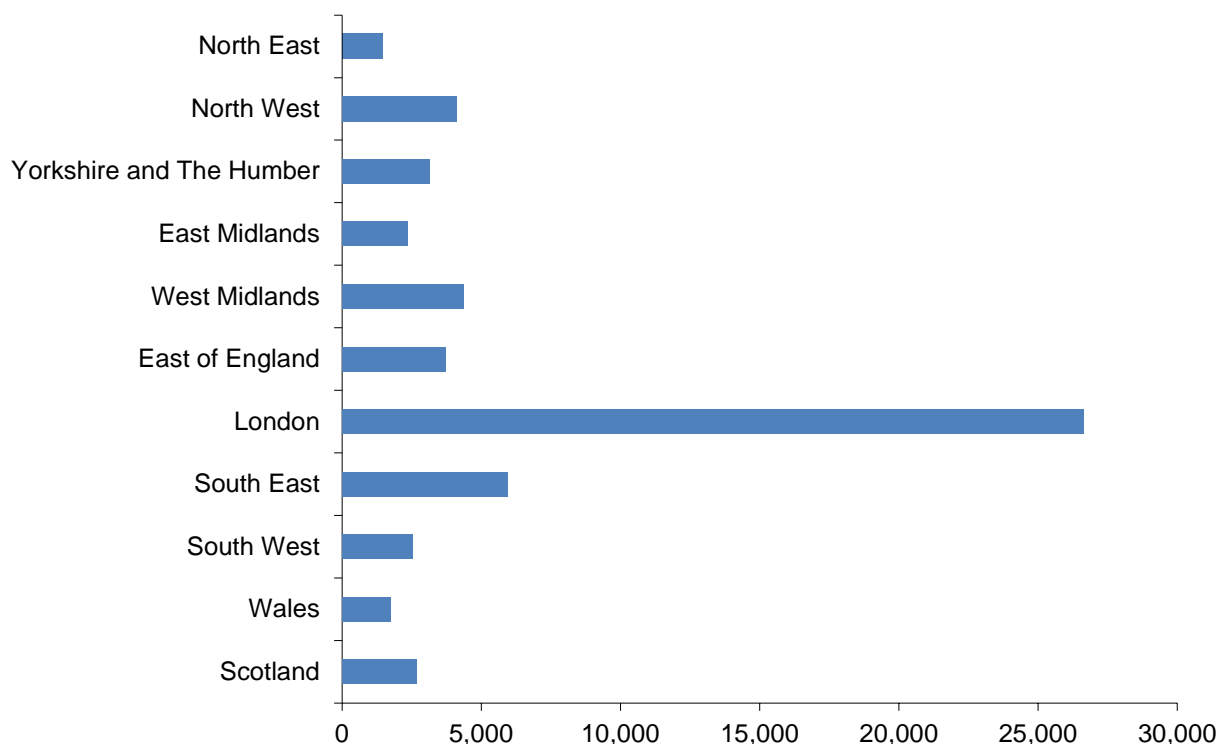
Details of who to contact with feedback can be found in [Annex E](#) and links to further information are included in [Annex F](#).

# Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

## Cumulative Caseload

The number of households capped since the introduction of the benefit cap (on 15 April 2013) to February 2015.

**Chart 1: Cumulative number of households capped by region  
From 15 April 2013 to February 2015**



Source: DWP IE Directorate 100% Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)

## Main Findings

Since the introduction of the benefit cap on 15 April 2013 to February 2015:

- 58.7 thousand households had their Housing Benefit capped.
- 45% of households affected by the benefit cap were in London.

See [Excel Data table 1](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

### Notes

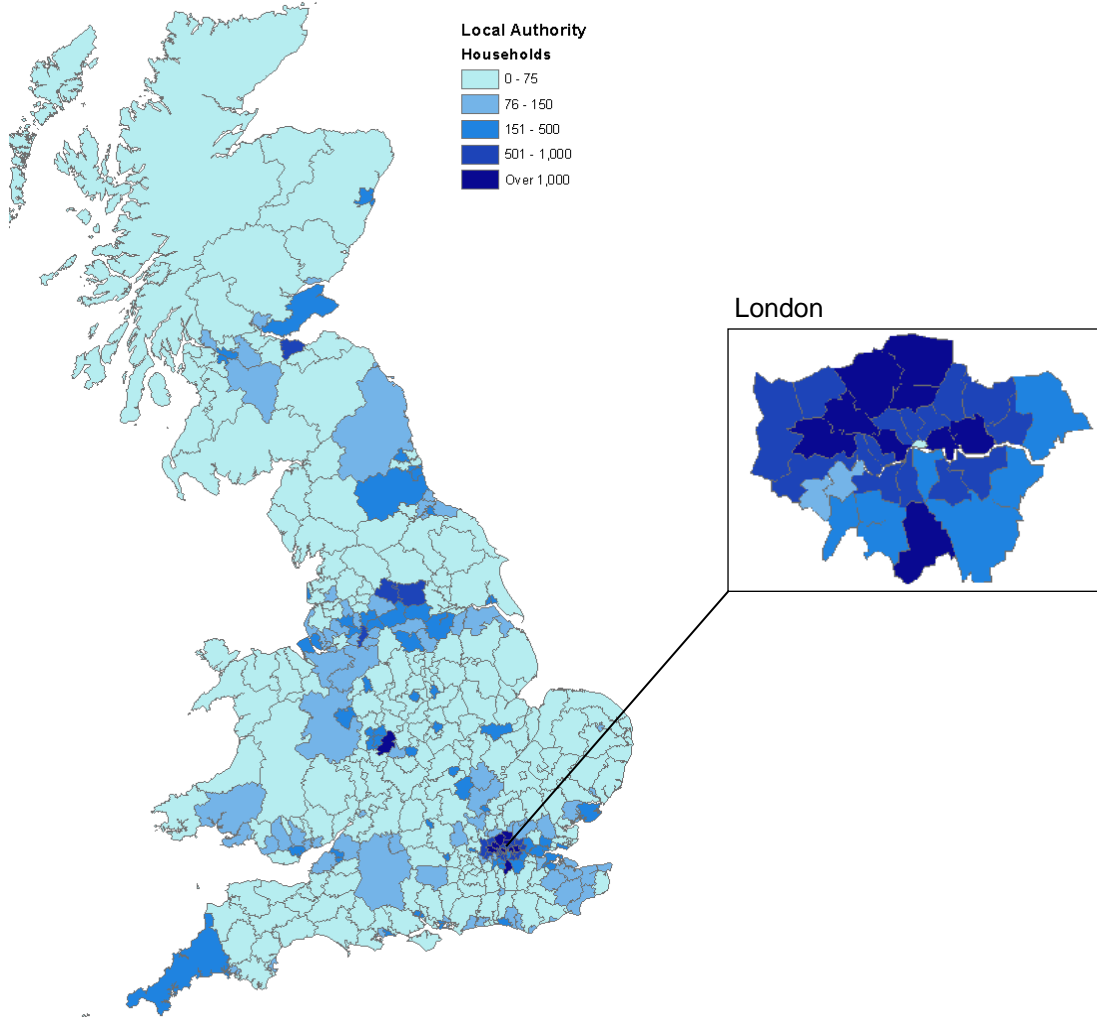
The cumulative caseload is based on the lead claimant. The addition or loss of a partner within a household (or a household moving to a different Local Authority and still subject to the cap) would not be counted as an additional benefit cap case where the lead claimant remains the same and there is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

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

Numbers have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. For this reason individual figures may not sum to totals. More information on this can be found in [Stat-Xplore](#).

# Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

Chart 2: Cumulative number of households capped by Local Authority  
From 15 April 2013 to February 2015



Source: DWP IE Directorate 100% Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)

## Main Findings

Since the introduction of the benefit cap on 15 April 2013 to February 2015:

- Of the top 20 Local Authorities with the highest number of households affected by the benefit cap, only one was outside London – Birmingham.

## Notes

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

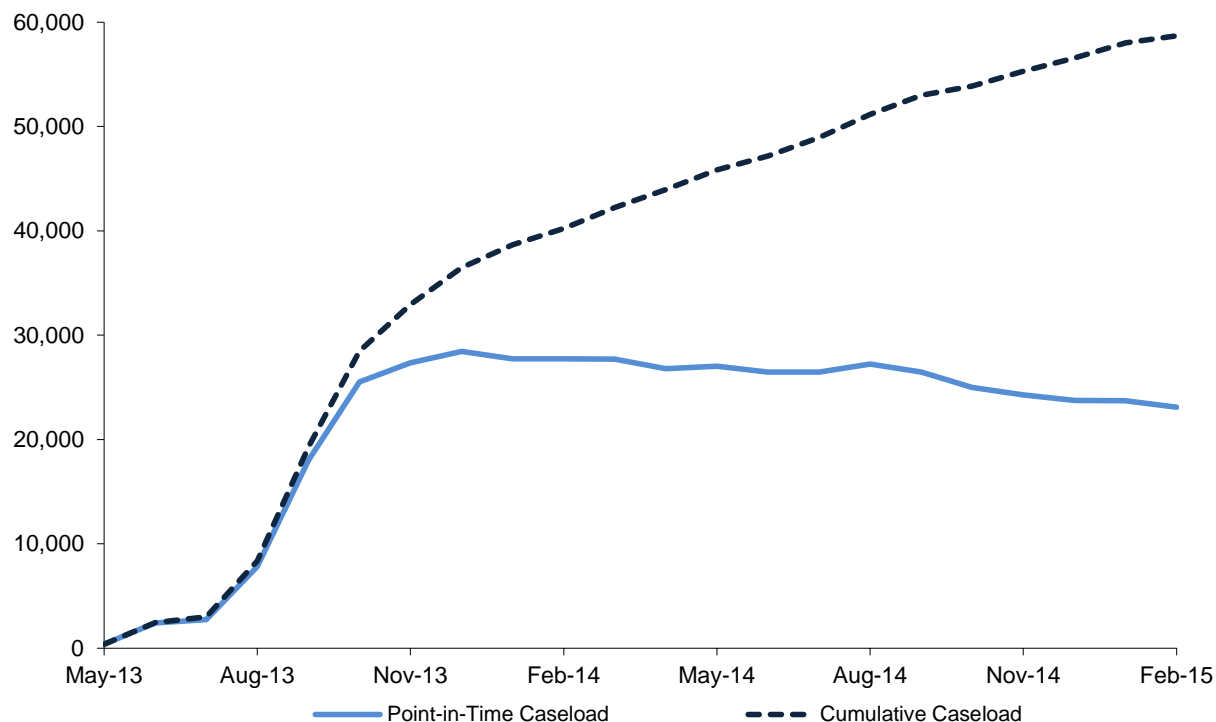
The geographical region or Local Authority reflects the initial Local Authority in which the cap was applied to that household.

## Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

### Point-in-Time Caseload

The number of households capped at each month from the introduction of the benefit cap (on 15 April 2013) to February 2015.

**Chart 3: Number of households capped (cumulative and point-in-time) by month  
From 15 April 2013 to February 2015**



Source: DWP IE Directorate 100% Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)

### Main Findings

- At February 2015, 23.1 thousand households had their Housing Benefit capped. This is a decrease of 1.2 thousand (5%); down from 24.3 thousand households in November 2014.
- Compared to the last quarter (November 2014) the proportion of (previously) capped households that are no longer capped has increased from 56% to 61%. This has contributed to the decrease in the point-in-time caseload compared to November 2014.

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

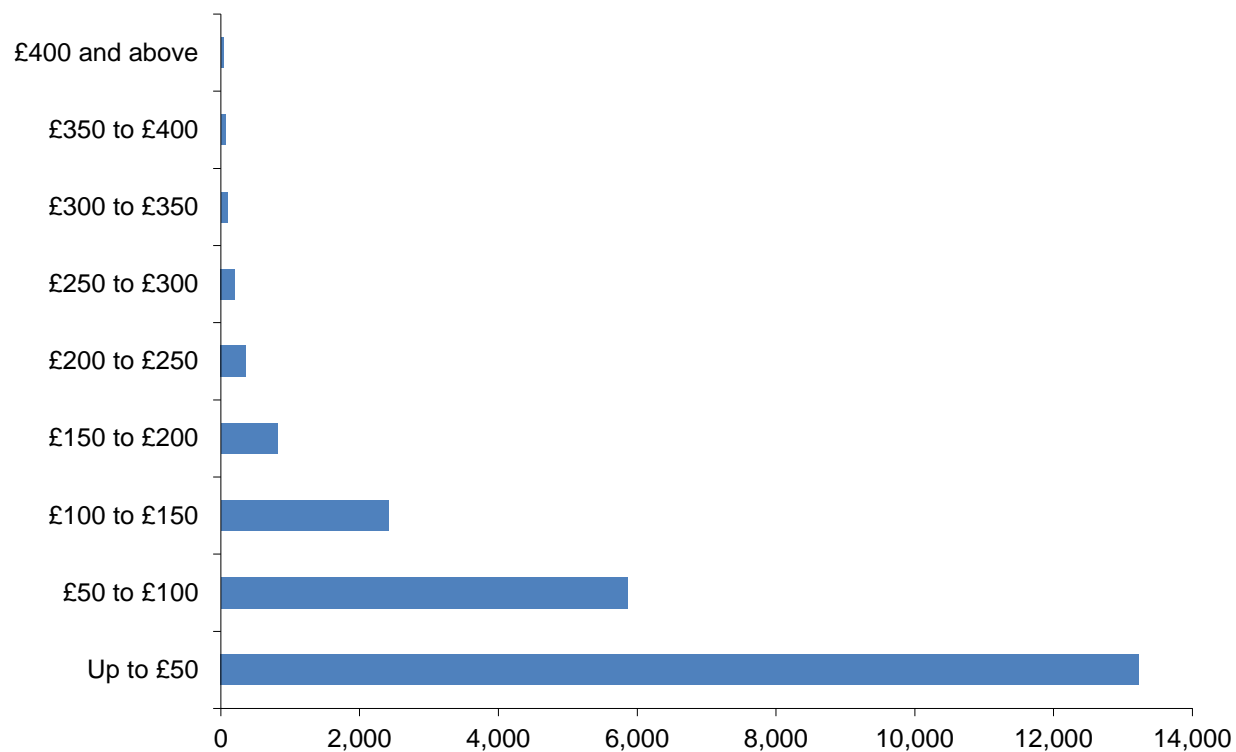
#### Notes

From 15 July 2013 the benefit cap was introduced nationally. The July 2013 SHBE was the first data to include national claimants.

Numbers have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. More information on this can be found in [Stat-Xplore](#).

## Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

Chart 4: Point-in-time number of households capped by weekly amount capped  
At February 2015



Source: DWP IE Directorate 100% Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)

### Main Findings

At February 2015:

- 83% of capped households were capped by £100 or less a week.
- Less than 1% of households were capped by more than £400 a week.

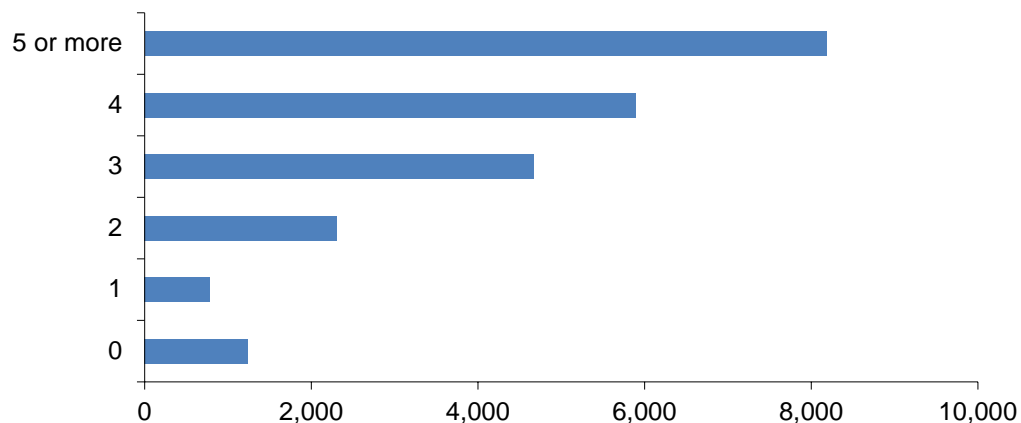
See Excel [Data table 2](#) or [Stat-Xplore](#) for full data.

#### Notes

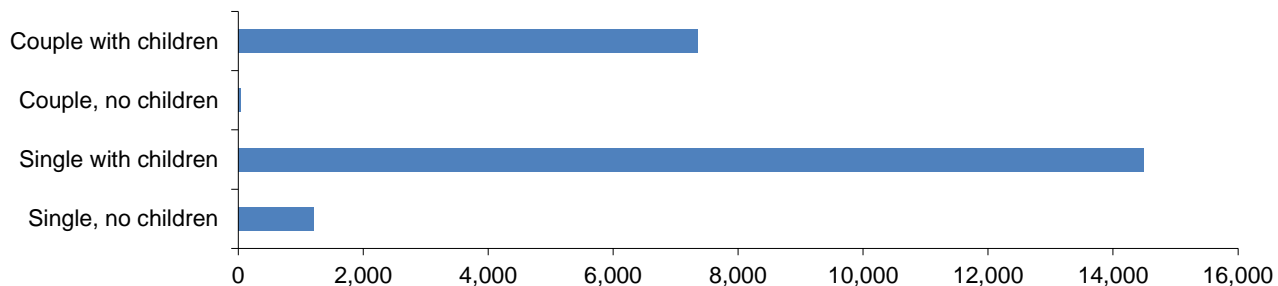
Numbers have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. For this reason, individual cells may not sum to totals. More information on this can be found in [Stat-Xplore](#).

## Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

**Chart 5: Point-in-time number of households capped by number of children  
At February 2015**



**Chart 6: Point-in-time number of households capped by household type  
At February 2015**



Source: DWP IE Directorate 100% Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)

### Main findings

At February 2015:

- 59% of capped households had between 1 and 4 children and 35% had 5 or more children.
- 5% of capped households had no child dependant(s).
- 63% of capped households constituted a single parent with child dependant(s).

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

#### Notes

Numbers have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. For this reason, individual cells may not sum to totals. More information on this can be found in [Stat-Xplore](#).

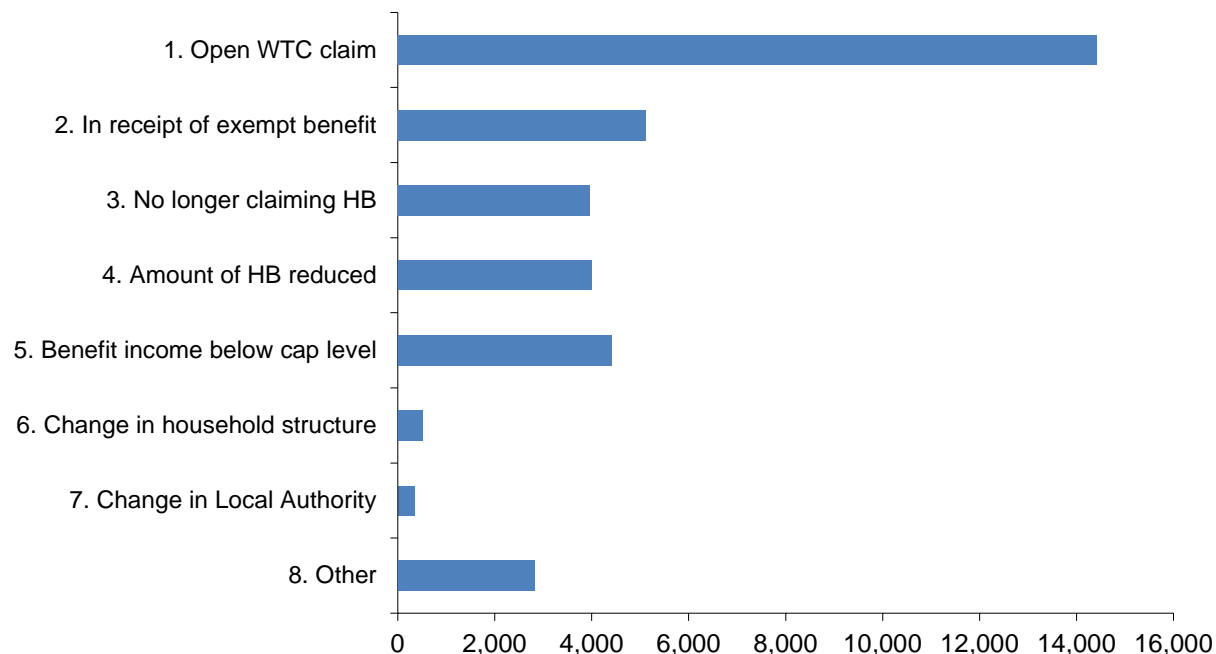


## Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

### Off-Flows by Outcome

The number of households who have (previously) been capped but are no longer subject to the cap at February 2015, with the reason why they have moved off the benefit cap.

**Chart 7: Off-flows by Household Outcome  
At February 2015**



Source: DWP IE Directorate 100% Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE), WTC and 100% DWP GMS benefit

### Main findings

At February 2015:

- 35.6 thousand households (61%) who have (previously) been capped are no longer subject to the cap. Of these, 14.4 thousand are exempt with an open Working Tax Credit (WTC) claim, which is 41% of those no longer subject to the cap.

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

#### Notes

As household circumstances may change, the outcome reflects the reason for no longer being capped at the point of reporting. Outcomes are hierarchically based. There may be a number of reasons why a household is no longer capped, but only the top-most reason for which they are eligible is counted. More information on this can be found in [Annex B](#).

Numbers have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. For this reason, individual cells may not sum to totals. More information on this can be found in [Stat-Xplore](#).

## **Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015**

### **Annex A: Administering the benefit cap**

The benefit cap limits a household's benefit income to:

- £500 a week for couples (with or without children living with them) and single parents whose children live with them.
- £350 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);
- Housing Benefit;
- Child Benefit;
- Child Tax Credit;
- other benefits such as Carer's Allowance.

The benefit cap is administered through Housing Benefit (HB), with a household's HB entitlement being reduced so that the total amount of benefit received is no longer higher than the cap level. A household which is not in receipt of HB will not currently be in scope for the cap.

One-off payments are not included in the assessment of benefit income.

Households which include someone who is entitled to Working Tax Credit are excluded from the cap. This is intended to increase the incentive for people to find employment because once they are in receipt of Working Tax Credit their benefits will no longer be subject to the cap. There is also a grace period of 39 weeks during which time the cap will not apply to households where the claimant or, if applicable, their partner has worked for 50 weeks out of the 52 weeks preceding their last day of work.

All households with someone, including a child, with a current award of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance, or receiving the support component of Employment and Support Allowance, or receiving Industrial Injuries Benefits (and those receiving War

## **Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015**

Disablement Pension and the equivalent payments from the Armed Forces Compensation Payments Scheme) are exempt from the benefit cap. This is in recognition of the extra costs disability can bring.

The exemption is also extended to households which include a member who is in receipt of War Widow's and War Widower's Pension. This is in line with the Government's commitment to offer special treatment to those who are serving or who have served in the Armed Forces, and to their dependants, in order to avoid disadvantage and recognise sacrifice for those seriously injured or killed.

The cap only applies to households in which at least one person is in receipt of a working age benefit.

## **Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015**

### **Annex B: Methods used to compile the statistics**

#### **Data Sources**

Data from the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) has been used to produce this analysis. SHBE is a monthly electronic scan of claimant level data direct from Local Authority computer systems. It has been designed to provide sufficient information for all current and future statistical purposes and is now the single source of Housing Benefit (HB) data. From April 2013, a Benefit Cap field was added to SHBE which provides the weekly amount that the HB of a household had been capped by. This marker is central to the production of this analysis.

Off-flow data is merged to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and DWP benefits data to determine outcomes.

#### **Data coverage and reporting month**

Local Authorities extract and return their data to DWP over a four week rolling period based on an extraction schedule for each Local Authority. For example, the latest "February" data shown here has typically been collated between 26 January and 19 February 2015. Each Local Authority may extract their data up to a week before the date it is scheduled to be returned to DWP. Consequently, the statistics do not directly relate to a particular date but rather show the position of capped cases over a monthly cycle.

#### **Definition of a household**

For the purposes of the benefit cap policy and hence this analysis, **a household is defined as one or two adults (living together as a couple) plus any 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 HB claim, for these cases, only the most recent claim is reported on.

## Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

### Identification of capped households

Over time, households will potentially move on and off the cap a number of times (for a variety of reasons). The data shows both **point-in-time caseload** (the number of households subject to the cap at the latest month available) and **cumulative caseload** (the overall number of households that have been capped from the introduction of the benefit cap to the latest month available). The difference between these two figures shows the number of previously capped households no longer subject to the benefit cap at the latest month available (**off-flows**).

### Benefit cap off-flows by outcome

Households may flow on and off the cap numerous times as circumstances change. This report contains data on the number of households no longer subject to the cap as at the reporting month. The reason for off-flow from the benefit cap is given as at the reporting month.

There may be multiple reasons for the cap to no longer apply for example moving to a cheaper area in a different Local Authority, which also reduces the Housing Benefit amount. Thus, to avoid multiple counts for a household, a hierarchical approach to outcome is used for reporting, with only the top-most reason for which a household is eligible being reported on:

1. Household has an open Working Tax Credit (WTC) claim.
2. Household is in receipt of an exempt benefit (Employment Support Allowance support group / Disability Living Allowance / Industrial Injuries / Personal Independence Payment).
3. Household is no longer claiming Housing Benefit (HB).
4. Amount of Housing Benefit claimed has reduced.
5. Household benefit income below cap level without a change to Housing Benefit amount.
6. Change in original household structure (i.e. change, addition or loss of a partner – does not include dependants).
7. Change in recorded Local Authority.
8. Other – includes grace period, operational factors / timing, no longer working age.

If a household remains no longer capped the reason for this may change over time. For example, a household may move off the cap initially due to benefit reducing to below the cap level, but as time passes move into work and claim Working Tax Credit and still remain off the cap. The reason for off-flow is always reported as at the reporting month. Not all outcomes reported on are a specific reason for a household to flow off the benefit cap, for example a change in Local Authority, but may indicate a change in circumstance leading to an off-flow.

## Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015

### Annex C: Data quality

In developing Benefit Cap Statistics, DWP has acted in accordance with the Code of Practice and supporting Principles.

These Official Statistics may not report on very short term capped households. This will occur in instances where a household is capped and then ceases to be capped all between the monthly snapshots taken from SHBE. In any such cases, the recorded SHBE data will not flag that a household has been capped, as at the times when scans were taken they were not. Therefore whilst accurate at the time of scan, it does not capture these households.

When looking at the off-flows and outcomes statistics, the following points should be noted:

- There is no single source of outcomes / reasons for households to flow off the cap. Latest 100% DWP benefit scans, weekly HMRC tax credit data and the SHBE extract are used to determine the most appropriate household benefits status.
- An open Working Tax Credit claim is a proxy for movements into work. This is not a comprehensive measure of moves into work; some individuals may go into work but not be eligible to claim Working Tax Credit if their earnings are too high or the hours worked do not meet the claim requirements.
- The results will be subject to retrospection as Working Tax Credit spells are recorded. It is possible that Working Tax Credit claims could be back dated.
- Due to churn in flows on / off the cap, the number of off-flows could fall from one month to the next if households move back onto the cap.
- The proportion of off-flows with a Working Tax Credit exemption will change over time.
- Some of the lower category outcomes are not specifically a reason in themselves to come off the cap but are a measurable change in circumstance that may lead to an off-flow, for example a change in Local Authority.

### Revisions

The Department's policy statement describes how DWP will handle revisions: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policy-statement-on-the-revision-of-dwp-statistics>

## **Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015**

### **Annex D: Users of the statistics**

Our users can be categorised as being from the following groups:

#### **Government policy making and policy monitoring:**

- a. Ministers
- b. Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) officials, e.g. policy makers and performance managers
- c. Parliament
- d. Jobcentre Plus staff

#### **Local Authorities and other public sector bodies**

#### **Academic Research**

#### **Others:**

- a. Media and commentators
- b. The general public

## **Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015**

### **Annex E: User feedback and contact points**

DWP have recently updated the content and structure of this publication, following a review process run by the UK Statistics Authority Good Practice Team. The aim of this was to make the publication as user-friendly as possible.

If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this publication, please contact DWP via [stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk).

We would be interested in hearing about what you use these statistics for and how well they meet your requirements.

If you would like to receive occasional e-mails from DWP to directly inform you of documents seeking the views of users, please email [general.statistics@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:general.statistics@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) giving details of the DWP publications you use.



## **Benefit Cap Quarterly Statistics: GB households capped to February 2015**

### **Annex F: Further Information**

Further information on the work of DWP can be found on the Internet at:

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/dwp>

Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/dwppressoffice>

Details of other National and Official Statistics produced by DWP can be found on the DWP website at the following links:

- A list of Tabulation Tools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/dwp-statistics-tabulation-tool>
- A schedule of statistical releases over the next 12 months and a list of the most recent releases:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>

In particular, statistics on Housing Benefit caseload can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/number-of-housing-benefit-claimants-and-average-weekly-spare-room-subsidy-amount-withdrawal>

In addition, users can find links to DWP additional statistical analyses that have not been included in our standard publications at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/ad-hoc-statistical-publications-list>

Other National Statistics publications, and general information about the official statistics system of the UK, are available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics>.