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Official Statistics

Universal Credit claimants statistics on the two child limit policy, April 2026

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Applies to England, Scotland and Wales

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Main Stories

The statistics show:

- in April 2026, 495,990 Universal Credit households were affected by the two child limit policy: that is, they had a third or subsequent child born on or after 6 April 2017. This was an increase of 15,700 (3%) from the total number of households affected on Universal Credit in April 2025. There were 1,752,200 children living in the households affected in April 2026, an increase of 44,770 (3%) from the total number of children living in the households affected on Universal Credit in April 2025
- there were 478,120 Universal Credit households that were not receiving the child element for at least one child because of the policy, with 1,695,400 children living in these households. Of those households, 436,780 (91%) are expected to see an increase in their Universal Credit award following the removal of the two child limit, with 1,544,900 (91%) children living in those households
- 29,460 households had an exception to the two child limit policy. The most common reason for an exception was for multiple births, accounting for 19,460 households (or 66% of those with an exception)
- the total number of households affected by the policy has increased since the first statistics were published in 2018, as more children have been born since 6 April 2017 into families with at least two existing children

What you should know

The Universal Credit two child limit policy was removed in April 2026, taking effect for assessment periods beginning on or after 6 April 2026. These statistics focus on the last full month of Universal Credit claims for which the policy applied, i.e. those Universal Credit claimants with assessment periods that ended in April 2026. As the two child limit policy has been removed, this is the final release for this statistical

publication.

Between 6 April 2017 and 5 April 2026, families on Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit were able to claim support for up to two children. There was further entitlement for third or subsequent children if they were born before 6 April 2017 or if an exception applied.

There were four categories of exception:

- additional children in a multiple birth where an extra amount was payable for all children in a multiple birth other than the first child
- likely to have been born as a result of non-consensual conception, which for this purpose included rape or where the claimant was in a controlling or coercive relationship with the child's other biological parent at the time of conception

An exception also applied for any children in a household who are:

- adopted when they would otherwise be in local authority care
- in non-parental caring arrangements when they would otherwise be at risk of entering the care system, including where a child (under 16) has a child

Child Tax Credit closed in April 2025, which means the two child limit policy only applied to Universal Credit from April 2025.

Further information and guidance on these statistics is available in the [background information and methodology document](#).

Overall numbers of households affected by two child limit policy

In April 2026, 495,990 UC households were affected by the two child limit policy ([see Table 1](#)), an increase of 15,700 (3%) in the total number of households affected on either Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit since April 2025. A household was affected by the policy if they had at least three children, at least one of whom was born on or after 6th April 2017.

Of the 495,990 affected households, 478,120 households (96%) were not receiving child element for at least one child in their household and 29,460 households (6%) had an exception to the policy. Households could both have an exception for one

child and not receive child element for another child, therefore the percentages do not total to 100%.

There were 1,752,200 children in households affected by the policy and 1,695,400 in households not receiving some child element because of the policy.

The 495,990 households affected by the policy represents 78% of all households with three or more children claiming UC. This proportion had increased over time as more households with three or more children included a child born on or after 6 April 2017.

Table 1: Total number of households in receipt of Universal Credit affected by the two child limit policy, April 2026

	UC households	All children within affected UC households	Affected children within UC households
All households in receipt of UC with three or more children	633,520	1,752,200	649,360
Affected households (reporting a third or subsequent child on or after 6 April 2017)	495,990	1,752,200	649,360
Households not receiving a child element/amount for at least one child	478,120	1,695,400	629,860
Households in receipt of an exception	29,460	110,560	47,120

Note: Affected children are third and subsequent children born on or after 6th April 2017. Affected households have at least one affected child.

Numbers of households likely to see an increase in their Universal Credit payment from the removal of the two child limit policy

Of the 478,120 households not receiving child element for at least one child in their household, 436,780 households are expected to see an increase in their Universal Credit payment following the removal of the two child limit ([see Table 2](#)). The figures in this section assume that the circumstances of these claimants remain unchanged until the policy is removed.

17,870 households already have exceptions for all of the children in their household affected by the policy, and therefore will not see any increase in their Universal Credit payment following the removal of the two child limit. There are 56,810 children in total living in these households.

5,930 households not receiving child element for at least one child in their household aren't expected to see an increase in their Universal Credit payment following the removal of the two child limit because the household receives [transitional protection](#) element per month in excess of £303.94 per child not receiving a child element due to the policy. There are 21,790 children in total living in these households.

35,530 households not receiving child element for at least one child in their household aren't expected to see an increase in their Universal Credit payment following the removal of the two child limit because the household was already affected by the [benefit cap](#). There are 129,160 children in total living in these households.

There is a small overlap of 120 households that are both not expected to see an increase due to [transitional protection](#) erosion and are also affected by the [benefit cap](#), with 450 children living in these households. Therefore the total of these two rows does not sum to the total row of 150,500 children in 41,340 households not expected to see an increase in UC payment.

Table 2: Number of households in receipt of Universal Credit likely to see or not see an increase in their Universal Credit payment from the removal of the two child limit policy, April 2026

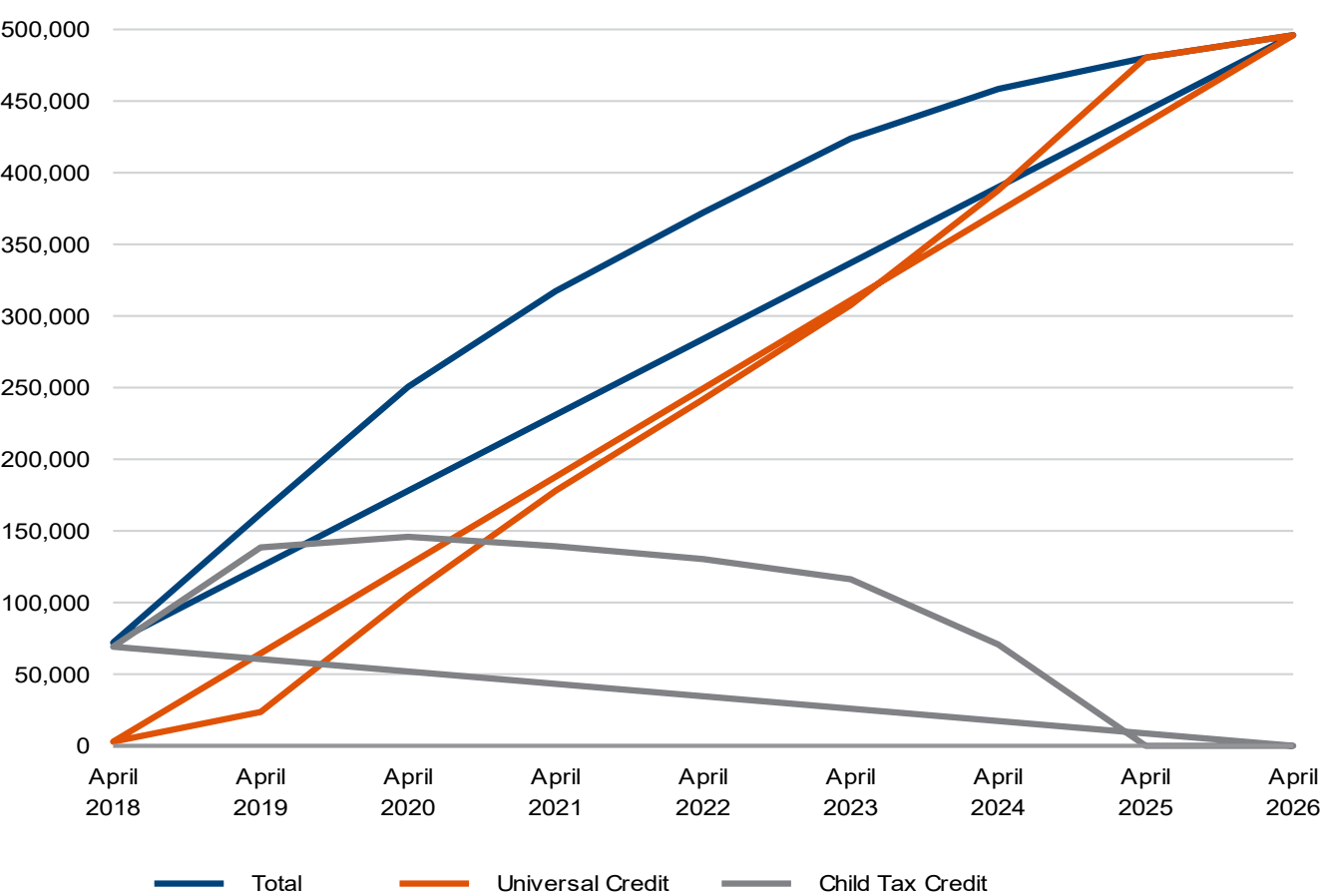
	UC households	All children within UC households
Has exceptions for all affected children (No increase possible)	17,870	56,810
Expected to see an increase in UC payment	436,780	1,544,900
Not expected to see an increase in UC payment (total)	41,340	150,500
Not expected to see an increase due to transitional protection erosion	5,930	21,790
Not expected to see an increase due to the benefit cap	35,530	129,160

Numbers of households affected by two child limit policy over time

In the year since the last publication there has been a net increase of 15,700 households affected by the two child limit policy, [\(see chart 1\)](#). This was an increase of 3%.

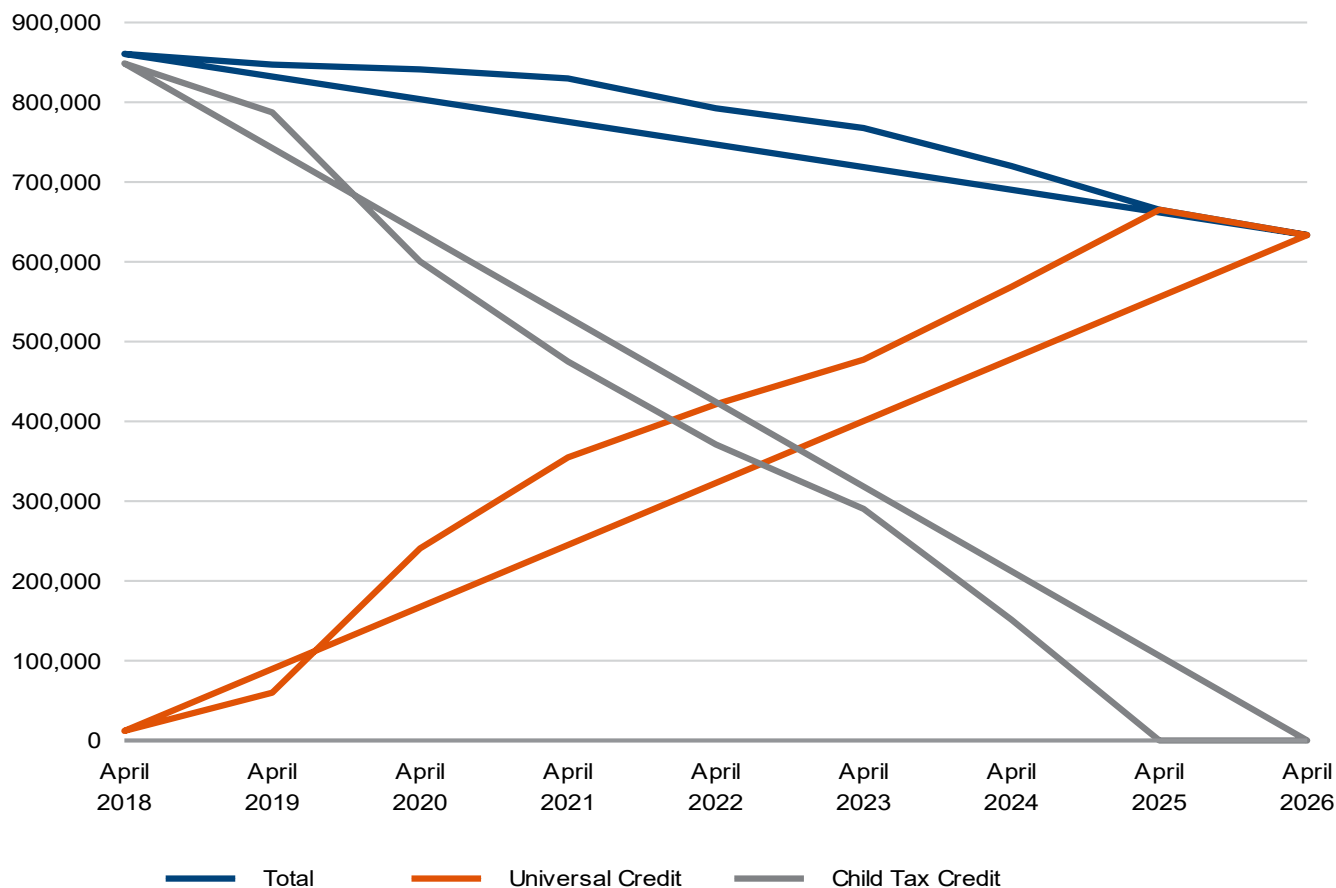
Child Tax Credit closed in April 2025, and many CTC claimants have moved to UC. Historic Child Tax Credit data is only available as an annual snapshot, and so monthly figures for CTC and for total CTC plus UC cannot be provided before CTC closed in April 2025. For statistics on CTC and the totals of CTC and UC for 2024 and earlier [see the 2024 release of these statistics](#).

Chart 1: Number of Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit households affected by the two child limit policy, by year to April 2026



The total number of households with three or more children, including children born before 6 April 2017, reduced from 665,320 households in April 2025 to 633,520 households in April 2026, ([see chart 2](#)). This was a decrease of 31,800 (-5%).

Chart 2: Number of Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit households with three or more children, by year to April 2026



Exceptions to the two child limit policy

In April 2026, 29,460 households claiming Universal Credit had at least one exception to the two child limit policy ([see Chart 3](#)).

Of these, 19,460 households (66% of those with an exception) had a multiple birth exception, 3,630 households (12%) had a non-parental care exception, 2,340 households (8%) households had an adoption exception, and 4,140 households (14%) had a non-consensual conception exception. Because a household may have different exceptions for different children, the percentages do not total to 100%.

Chart 3: Number of Universal Credit households with an exception to the two child limit policy, by type of exception, April 2026

UC households with

% of UC households with

	exceptions to the policy	exceptions to the policy
Multiple birth	19,460	66%
Non-parental care	3,630	12%
Adoption	2,340	8%
Non-consensual conception	4,140	14%

Family composition

Just over half (55%) of households affected by the policy are single households and just under half (45%) are couple households.

Most households affected by the policy (64%) had three children, 25% had four children, 8% had five children and 4% of households had six or more children.

Chart 4: Number of Universal Credit households affected by the two child limit policy, by family composition, April 2026

	UC households affected by the policy	% of affected UC households
Single UC claim	270,830	55%
Couple UC claim	225,160	45%
3 children	317,030	64%

4 children	122,320	25%
5 children	38,280	8%
6 or more children	18,360	4%

In work and out of work

Over half (58%) of households affected by the policy are in work (i.e. they have earnings).

Chart 5: Number of Universal Credit households affected by the two child limit policy, by work status, April 2026

	UC households affected by the policy	% of affected UC households
In work	287,090	58%
Out of work	208,900	42%

Benefit cap

37,100 (7%) of households affected by the two child limit policy in April 2026 were also affected by the [benefit cap](#). There are a total of 134,060 children living in those households, of which 52,530 children are third or subsequent children directly affected by the two child limit policy.

Note: This section is for all households affected by the two child limit policy and is not the same as the Benefit Cap numbers provided in the earlier section on households [likely to see an increase](#) in their Universal Credit payment from the removal of the two child limit policy.

Claimant characteristics

For additional breakdowns by gender, age, ethnicity, and ethnic group, see the [accompanying data tables](#).

Gender

Of households affected by the two child limit policy, 98% had at least one female claimant, and 46% had at least one male claimant. These figures do not add up to 100%, because many couple households contain both a female and male claimant.

Ethnicity and Ethnic Group

This is being released as [statistics in development](#). We welcome feedback from users on this and other developments.

Of households affected by the two child limit policy that responded to a question about their ethnicity, the largest ethnic group was White, where 69% of households had at least one claimant in the White ethnic group, and 64% had at least one claimant in the White British ethnic subgroup (see the [accompanying data tables](#)). The second largest ethnic group was Asian, where 15% of households had at least one claimant in the Asian ethnic group.

These figures exclude the “unspecified” 17% of households affected by the policy that did not respond to the question or answered “prefer not to say”.

Chart 6: Households affected by two child limit policy by ethnic group, April 2026

	UC households affected by the policy	% of affected UC households where at least one claimant responded
Household with a white claimant	285,760	69%
Household with an asian claimant	62,050	15%
Household with a black claimant	33,210	8%
Household with an arab claimant	11,530	3%
Household with a mixed ethnicity claimant	12,930	3%
Household with a claimant of other ethnicity	18,240	4%
Household with a claimant of unspecified ethnicity	119,930	-
Household where all claimants are of unspecified ethnicity	84,220	-

Health and disability benefits

Information is available on health and disability benefits [here](#):

For information on extra amounts on UC for a disabled child, or a claimant with limited capability for work and work related activity (LCWRA), see: [Universal Credit: What you'll get](#)

For information on Disability Living Allowance, see: [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#)

For information on Disability Living Allowance for children, see: [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\) for children](#)

For information on Personal Independence Payment, see: [Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\)](#)

Limited capability for work element of UC

80,950 (16%) of households affected by the two child limit policy had at least one claimant that qualifies for an [extra monthly amount of UC](#) health/LCWRA element. This group includes households with at least one claimant that had limited capability for work or work related activity (LCWRA), and households with at least one claimant awarded limited capability for work (LCW) before 2017. There are a total of 288,480 children living in those households.

Disabled child element of UC

159,960 (32%) of households affected by the two child limit policy had at least one child that is disabled and qualifies for an [extra monthly amount of UC](#) disabled child element. There are a total of 584,820 children living in those households.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

144,920 (29%) of households affected by the two child limit policy had at least one child in receipt of [DLA](#). There are a total of 530,700 children living in those households.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

58,620 (12%) of households affected by the two child limit policy had at least one claimant in receipt of [PIP](#). There are a total of 210,120 children living in those households.

11,800 (2%) of households affected by the two child limit policy had at least one child in receipt of [PIP](#). There are a total of 46,060 children living in those households.

Households receiving any health or disability benefits

220,640 (44%) of households affected by the two child limit policy had at least one claimant or child with any of the following health and disability benefits: health (or LCWRA) element of UC, disabled child element of UC, DLA or PIP. There are a total of 797,150 children living in those households.

Chart 7: Households affected by two child limit policy and receiving health and disability benefits, April 2026

	UC households affected by the policy	% of affected UC households
Household with at least one claimant or child with any of the following health or disability benefits:	220,640	44%
Claimant receiving health/LCWRA element of UC	80,950	16%
Child receiving disabled child element of	159,960	32%

UC

Child receiving DLA	144,920	29%
Claimant receiving PIP	58,620	12%
Child receiving PIP	11,800	2%

Geography

The number of households with an exception, as a proportion of the number of households affected by the policy, is similar in all countries and regions of the UK, although there is more variation at a lower geographical level.

For additional breakdowns by country, region, parliamentary constituency and local authority, see the [accompanying data tables](#).

Feedback

We welcome feedback.

We are committed to improving the official statistics we publish. We want to encourage and promote user engagement, so we can improve our statistical outputs. We would welcome any views you have using the following contact information.

DWP Press Office

For media enquiries, please contact the [DWP press office](#).

Statistical contacts

S Lewis and A Snowsill: ucad.briefinganalysis@dwp.gov.uk

We are only able to reply to questions about the statistics.

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