

# Key arguments & messaging to support lifting the two child limit



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## The research

New research from 38 Degrees with support from the End Child Poverty Coalition finds:

- You can maximise support for scrapping the two child limit with appropriate messaging
- There are local and regional cash boosts to be gained from lifting the limit.

## About the two child limit

The two child limit was introduced in April 2017, and limits the 'child element' families receive in benefit payments, to the first two children (if the third or subsequent child was born after April 2017). Families impacted by this policy lose out on £3455 per year per child.

This policy pushes families into poverty. Scrapping the two child limit is the most cost-effective way to reduce the number of families living in poverty.

For every day this policy remains in place, 109 children are pulled into poverty.

## Messaging framing for maximum public support

In order to ensure that the general public understand the links between the two-child limit and the need to scrap this harmful policy, it is important for there to be clear messaging. This new research has shown that it is possible to grow public support for lifting the limit by making the case that it is unfair to deny support to parents, who have lost the ability to care for three or more children, through no fault of their own. This angle is particularly successful in helping to bring the policy to life for non-recipients of welfare, as it makes the issue more

relatable - reminding people that it could affect them (see Figure 1).

The humanitarian case for reducing child poverty was also compelling: the statistic of 250,000 children being lifted out of poverty (this figure is now 300,000) and poverty being reduced for a further 700,000 is enormously powerful and should be combined with humanising narratives to illustrate the impact of the limit on real families (see Figure 1).

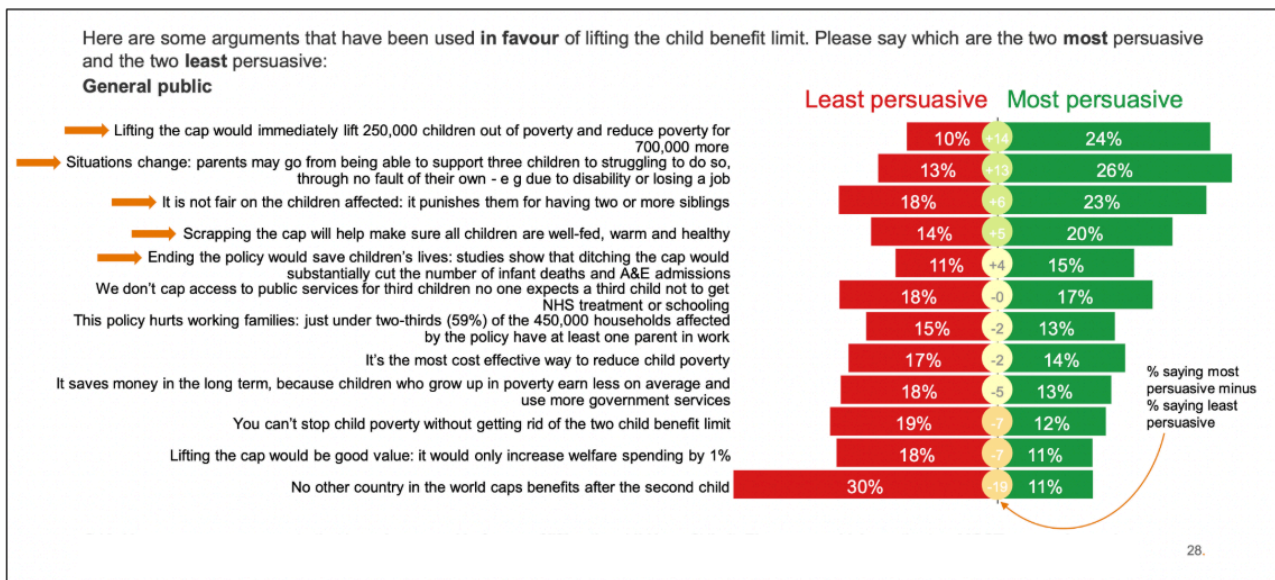
## Counter-arguments and messaging pitfalls to avoid

There are strong perceptions around people abusing the welfare system which need to be challenged by emphasising that most - two thirds - of families affected by the limit are in work, or by focusing on systemic issues such as low-paid work which cause parents to struggle financially. Avoid claims of cost-effectiveness as a central argument for this policy, as it is not particularly strong. Similarly, international comparisons don't resonate (see Figure 1). Arguing that the policy "punishes children" was seen to be a divisive argument in focus groups, as participants argued that the limit punishes parents more. This messaging should be avoided.

## Methodology

The messaging research was conducted by J.L. Partners, who polled a nationally representative sample of 2024 Labour voters and a nationally representative sample of GB adults. Fieldwork dates were 16th to 19th August 2024 for Labour voters and 18th to 20th August 2024 for the general public. The sample was 1,507 Labour voters and 1,003 GB Adults.

**Figure 1: “Here are some arguments that have been used in favour of lifting the child benefit limit. Please say which are the two most persuasive and two least persuasive.” Responses by the general public:**



## Local and regional cash boosts from lifting the limit

38 Degrees also commissioned IPPR to conduct analysis into the cash boost that local areas and regions across the UK would receive as a result of the cap being lifted, based on the proportions of households affected in those areas, to demonstrate the wider community benefit of the policy being scrapped.

The results show that Local Authorities would benefit from a range of different cash boost levels, based on eligible households, with some areas seeing this benefit stretching into the tens of millions of pounds. For example, in Birmingham this figure would be £75,054,770.

[Click here for a full breakdown of LA cash boosts](#)

As a result, wider regions would also benefit from the following cash boosts (see Table 1):

Government Office Region	Estimated cash boost	% of GDP
South East	£184,199,431	0.04%
South West	£113,887,832	0.05%
East Midlands	£139,763,328	0.09%
West Midlands	£235,110,029	0.12%
North West	£262,043,145	0.10%
North East	£84,205,925	0.11%
London	£266,150,961	0.04%
Yorkshire and The Humber	£189,494,051	0.10%
East	£155,987,350	0.07%
Scotland	£106,521,732	0.05%
Wales	£81,476,784	0.09%

**Table 1**

## Methodology

IPPR conducted this analysis using FOI data from DWP and HMRC on the number of households and children affected by the two-child limit, alongside data from DWP Stat-Xplore and the Office for National Statistics. The analysis also accounts for the effects of the benefit cap.

## About 38 Degrees

38 Degrees is a community of a million people who - in a moment away from their busy days - take small actions on issues they care about, which all add up to something bigger, a movement for a better Britain for everyone who calls our country home.

With supporters in every UK constituency, we come from all walks of life; we're nurses, taxi drivers, parents, shopkeepers, pensioners and more. With on and offline campaigning technology, a creative and dedicated staff team and a people powered movement, we work to change lives, communities and our country, and by coming together we can have an impact far greater than any of us could achieve alone.

For more information about this research or our other campaigns please email [publicaffairs@38degrees.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@38degrees.org.uk).

## About End Child Poverty

The End Child Poverty Coalition is made up of over 130 organisations including child welfare groups, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and others.

Together with a group of Youth Ambassadors we all believe that no child growing up in the UK should live in poverty. We ask that this and future governments commit to end child poverty.

For more information, please email Rachel Walters at [rachel@endchildpoverty.org.uk](mailto:rachel@endchildpoverty.org.uk)