

Every Parliamentary
Constituency is now
blighted by the impact
of the two-child limit



Summary

- Across the UK 1.5 million children live in households that are subject to the two-child limit to benefit payments.¹ This is 1 child in every 10.
- Every UK constituency is now home to families impacted by this policy.
- But there is widespread variation across the country – in some constituencies the rate is as high as 3 in 10 children affected by this policy.
- There is a clear divide across England, with regions in the North of England seeing the highest levels of children impacted by the policy. The West Midlands is the region with the highest levels at 14%. In the North West and Yorkshire & Humber the figure is 13%. In the North East it is 12%.
- In general, the constituencies most affected by the two-child limit are those with the highest child poverty rates.
- The strong relationship between the limit and poverty is unsurprising as families subject to the two-child limit are missing out on up to £3,235 per child in 2023/24.²
- Even in the South East, the least affected region, over 160,000 children's life chances are blighted by this policy.
- The cost of scrapping the two-child limit is £1.3 billion³ – in 2023/24, making it the most cost-effective way to reduce child poverty. As doing so would immediately lift 250,000 children out of poverty.⁴

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I am a single parent to three children. My youngest was born in May 2017 – so we were one of the first families to be hit by the two-child limit. **This policy had a huge impact on our family.** I had to put my 3-month-old son into childcare so that I could go and wash pots in order to pay for essentials. I often had to choose between paying for new clothes for my children or paying the gas and electricity bill. I had to take out loans to be able to afford food.

Today, I am still impacted by this policy psychologically. My children have even said that they don't want kids of their own because they have seen me struggle.

Rosie, mother to three children in the North East

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¹ From <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022#main-stories>

² Department for Work and Pensions, Benefit and pension rates 2023 to 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2023-to-2024/benefit-and-pension-rates-2023-to-2024#universal-credit>, access 2023

³ Child Poverty Action Group, **Budget submission 2023**, 2023

⁴ Child Poverty Action Group, **Budget submission 2023**, 2023

The Two-Child Limit and Child Poverty

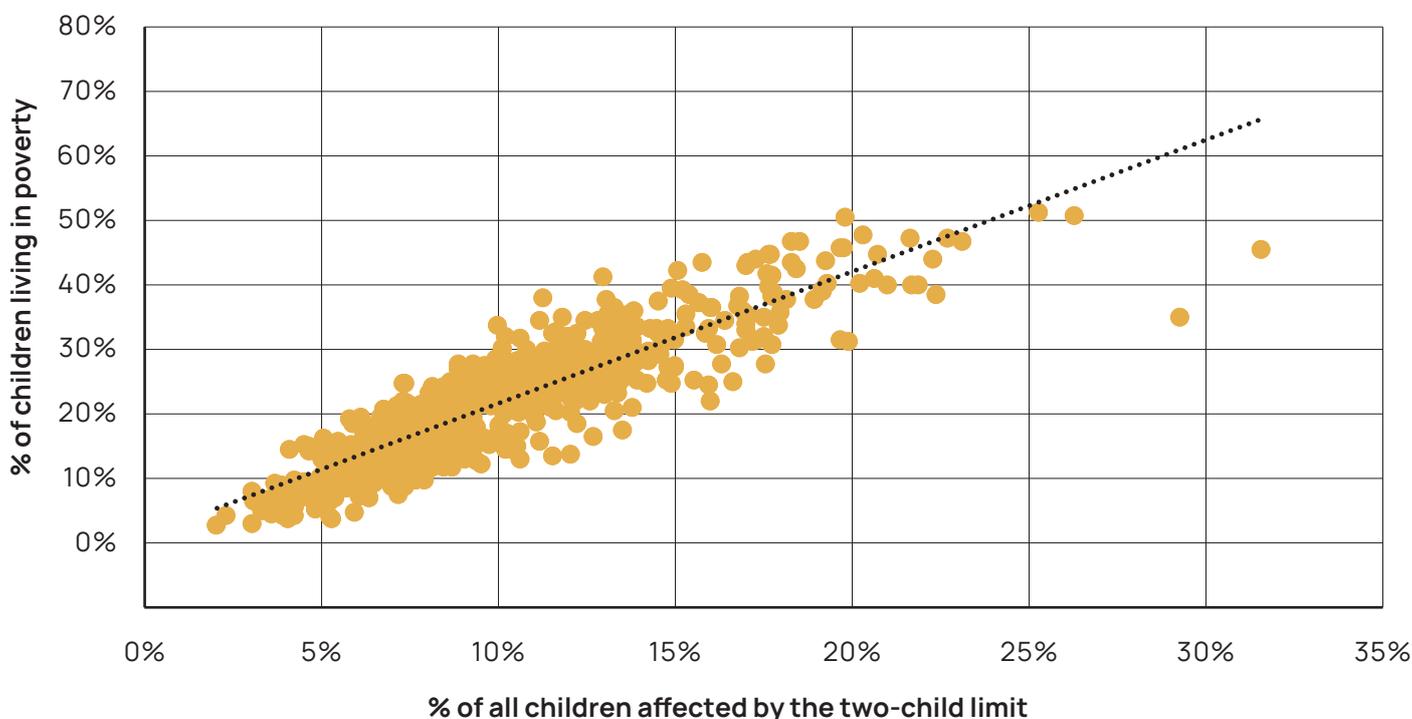
New data⁵ obtained by the End Child Poverty Coalition shows the huge scale at which the two-child limit is impacting families across the UK. In April 2023 there were 1.5 million children affected by the two-child limit,⁶ this is equal to 1 in 10 children.

Larger families are much more likely to experience poverty. The poverty rate for children in families with three or more children was 42%, compared with 23% and 22% among children in families with one or two children.⁷

Figure one below shows the clear positive correlation between the proportion of children living in relative poverty in each Westminster constituency, and the proportion of children in each constituency who are living in families subject to the two-child limit.



Figure one: the correlation between the percentage of children living in relative poverty in each Westminster constituency, and the percentage of children living in families subject to the two-child limit to benefit payments



⁵ See end notes for information on how the data was obtained.

⁶ From <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022#main-stories>

⁷ Stone, J. 2023. *Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2021/22*. Available here: https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Local-indicators-of-child-poverty-after-housing-costs_Final-Report-3.pdf

People who claim Universal Credit can receive the 'child element' worth up to £269.58 per child per month in 2023/24.⁸ If a family has a third or subsequent child born after 6th April 2017, their child element is capped and no further money is provided for other children a family may have. Families subject to the two-child limit are therefore missing out on up to £3,235 per child in 2023/24.

Many families could have planned to support more than two children, but for many reasons including; a family break up, death of a partner, losing a job and the cost-of-living crisis – are no longer able to meet the financial requirements of providing for their family.

Research has shown that the two-child limit has little impact on reducing family size⁹ or increasing numbers of parents who enter employment. In

fact, the majority (58%) of families affected by the policy are already in work.¹⁰ Affected parents who would like to enter work or increase their working hours, often face considerable barriers to doing so. Such as the cost and availability of childcare, and the availability of well-paid part-time work to fit round school opening hours.

The policy has a significant impact on the lives of children. The two-child limit is one of the biggest drivers of rising child poverty. By 2027/28, over 50 per cent of children in families with more than two children are forecast to be in poverty.¹¹ 250,000 children would be lifted out of poverty, and 850,000 children would live in less deep poverty if the policy were scrapped.¹²

The cost of scrapping the two-child limit is £1.3 billion – in 2023/24, making it the most cost-effective way to reduce child poverty.¹³



⁸ DWP, *Benefit and pension rates 2023 to 2024*, 2022

⁹ From <https://largerfamilies.study/publications/the-two-child-limit-and-choices-over-family-size/>

¹⁰ From <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022#overall-numbers-of-households-affected-by-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-two-children>

¹¹ From <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-outlook-2023/>

¹² Child Poverty Action Group, *Budget submission 2023*, 2023

¹³ Child Poverty Action Group, *Budget submission 2023*, 2023

The Two-Child Limit Across Westminster Constituencies

Table one shows that in England and Wales 11% of all children living there are being impacted by the policy, 10% in Northern Ireland and in Scotland 9% of all children are impacted.

Six English regions (**table two**) have over 11% of all children living in families that are subject to the two-child limit. The West Midlands has the highest percentage with 14%. This region also has the highest level of relative child poverty, with 38% of all children living in poverty.

The four regions with the highest percentages of children living in families impacted by the policy are in the north of England. The percentages for these regions are also higher than the English average, showing the north/south divide in the impact of this policy.



Table one: the total number and percentages of children in each UK country living in families impacted by the two-child limit, compared with the Local Child Poverty rates

UK Nations	Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit			% of all children in area living in a family affected by the 2-child limit	Local child poverty data 2021/22	
	Total number of households affected	Total number of Children in these families	3rd or more child		Number of children living in poverty in Millions	% of children living in poverty
England	371,230	1,335,080	426,030	11%	3.7	31%
Wales	19,600	69,520	22,270	11%	0.2	28%
Scotland	25,050	87,160	28,020	9%	0.2	24%
Northern Ireland	12,800	44,950	14,870	10%	0.1	22%

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This makes things hard when a child asks to do things like dance or football as there isn't enough to support them. My oldest two stopped cadets and the other stopped football due to the cost.

Parent from Swindon

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Table two: English regional data for the two-child limit

English regions	Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit			% of all children in area living in a family affected by the 2-child limit	Local child poverty data 2021/22	
	Total number of households affected	Total number of Children in these families	3rd or more child		Number of children living in poverty in Millions	% of children living in poverty
West Midlands	50,390	183,030	58,560	14%	0.5	38%
North West	57,680	208,680	66,680	13%	0.5	34%
Yorkshire and the Humber	42,060	150,920	48,150	13%	0.4	31%
North East	18,260	65,460	20,870	12%	0.2	35%
London	63,920	231,470	73,570	11%	0.7	33%
East Midlands	30,570	109,630	34,850	11%	0.3	33%
East of England	35,260	125,810	39,940	9%	0.3	24%
South West	27,380	97,530	31,230	9%	0.3	27%
South East	45,710	162,550	52,180	8%	0.5	25%

Table three highlights the 20 constituencies with the highest percentages of children living in families subject to the two-child limit. Blackley and Broughton is the constituency with the highest percentage at 32%. Which equals 3 in every 10 children here living in a family which is subject to the policy.

89 Westminster constituencies across the UK have at least 15% of all children living in a family which is subject to the two-child limit.

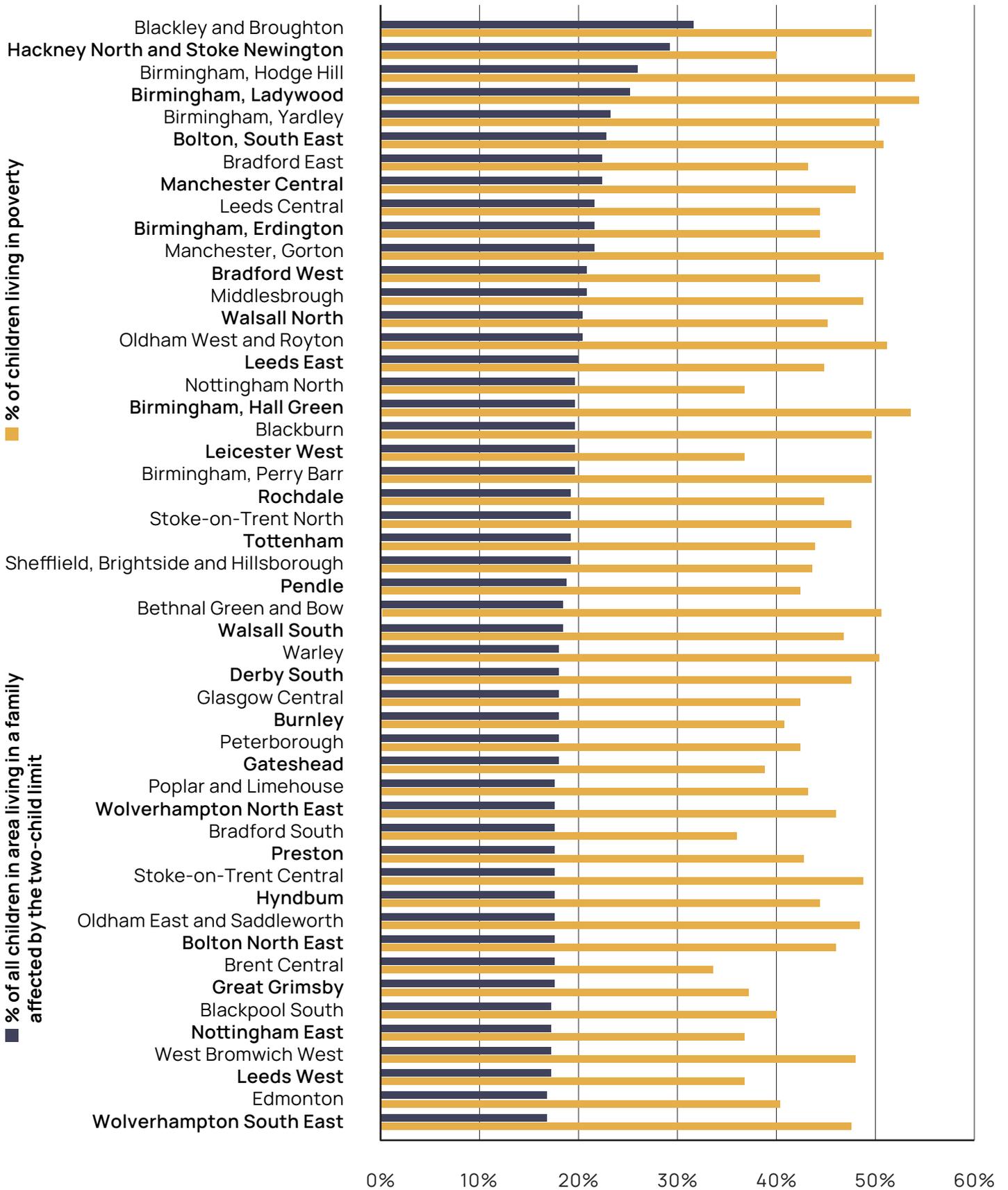
333 constituencies have 10% or more, which is just over half of the 650 constituencies across the UK.



Table three: 20 constituencies with the highest percentages of children living in families subject to the two-child limit

Gov name	Nation/ region	Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit			% of all children in area living in a family affected by the 2-child limit	Local child poverty data 2021/22	
		Total number of households affected	Total number of Children in these families	3rd or more child		Number of children living in poverty	% of children living in poverty
Blackley and Broughton	North West	2,860	11,970	3,760	32%	18,761	49.4%
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	London	2,370	10,860	3,440	29%	14,888	40.1%
Birmingham, Hodge Hill	West Midlands	3,030	11,490	3,610	26%	23,630	54.0%
Birmingham, Ladywood	West Midlands	2,550	9,590	3,050	25%	20,723	54.6%
Birmingham, Yardley	West Midlands	2,010	7,440	2,350	23%	16,227	50.4%
Bolton South East	North West	1,770	6,590	2,110	23%	14,781	50.9%
Bradford East	Yorkshire and The Humber	2,300	8,480	2,650	22%	16,355	43.1%
Manchester Central	North West	1,900	7,060	2,230	22%	15,216	48.1%
Leeds Central	Yorkshire and The Humber	1,970	7,160	2,300	22%	14,553	44.4%
Birmingham, Erdington	West Midlands	1,590	5,880	1,860	22%	12,043	44.4%
Manchester, Gorton	North West	1,810	6,670	2,130	22%	15,656	50.8%
Bradford West	Yorkshire and The Humber	2,030	7,460	2,350	21%	15,808	44.5%
Middlesbrough	North East	1,330	4,880	1,550	21%	11,466	48.7%
Walsall North	West Midlands	1,440	5,210	1,700	21%	11,443	45.3%
Oldham West and Royton	North West	1,690	6,040	1,920	20%	15,272	51.3%
Leeds East	Yorkshire and The Humber	1,520	5,700	1,830	20%	12,603	44.7%
Nottingham North	East Midlands	1,490	5,380	1,740	20%	9,941	36.7%
Birmingham, Hall Green	West Midlands	1,790	6,670	2,080	20%	18,090	53.7%
Blackburn	North West	1,730	6,250	1,980	20%	15,714	49.7%
Leicester West	East Midlands	1,470	5,490	1,740	20%	10,304	36.9%

Figure two: the 50 constituencies with the highest percentages of children living in families impacted by the two-child limit, presented alongside the percentage of children living in poverty



Information on the two-child limit in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Table four: the 10 constituencies in Scotland with the highest proportion of children living in families affected by the two-child limit

Gov name	Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit			% of all children in area living in a family affected by the 2 child limit	Local child poverty data 2021/22	
	Total number of households affected	Total number of Children in these families	3rd or more child		Number of children living in poverty	% of children living in poverty
Glasgow Central	780	2,820	880	18%	6,600	42.4%
Glasgow South West	760	2,650	850	14%	6,548	34.6%
Glasgow North East	610	2,200	700	14%	5,817	36.2%
Glenrothes	700	2,460	800	14%	5,821	32.2%
Glasgow East	690	2,400	770	12%	6,700	34.1%
Glasgow North West	550	1,930	610	12%	5,363	32.4%
West Dunbartonshire	540	1,950	640	11%	4,696	27.6%
Dundee West	470	1,650	520	11%	4,457	29.8%
Motherwell and Wishaw	580	1,990	640	11%	5,729	30.6%
Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross	310	1,150	360	11%	2,216	20.4%



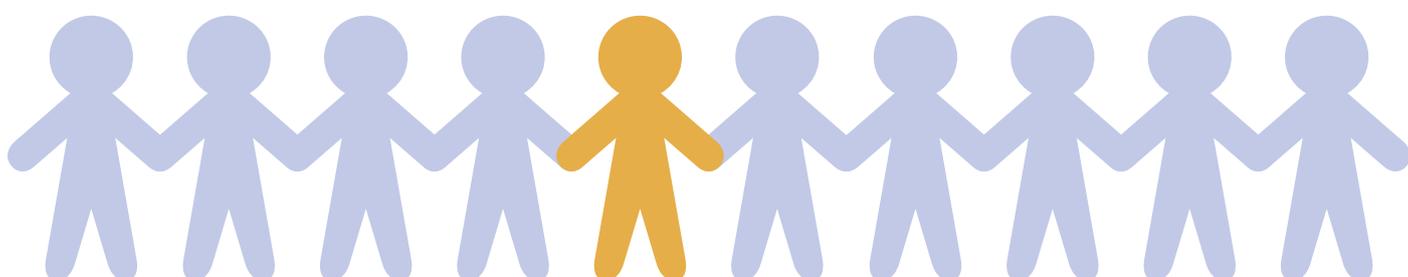
Table five: the 10 constituencies in Wales with the highest proportion of children living in families affected by the two-child limit

Gov name	Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit			% of all children in area living in a family affected by the 2 child limit	Local child poverty data 2021/22	
	Total number of households affected	Total number of Children in these families	3rd or more child		Number of children living in poverty	% of children living in poverty
Vale of Clwyd	640	2,380	750	16%	4,808	31.3%
Cardiff South and Penarth	1,100	4,040	1,300	15%	8,973	33.2%
Swansea East	710	2,460	780	13%	4,455	24.4%
Newport East	730	2,600	840	13%	6,517	33.5%
Rhondda	550	1,950	620	13%	4,962	33.8%
Torfaen	660	2,360	770	13%	5,485	29.9%
Aberavon	510	1,800	570	13%	3,371	23.7%
Cardiff West	810	2,880	910	13%	6,539	28.6%
Blaenau Gwent	500	1,680	540	12%	4,124	30.3%
Cynon Valley	530	1,860	610	12%	5,066	33.0%



Table six: the 10 constituencies in Northern Ireland with the highest proportion of children living in families affected by the two-child limit

Gov name	Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit			% of all children in area living in a family affected by the 2 child limit	Local child poverty data 2021/22	
	Total number of households affected	Total number of Children in these families	3rd or more child		Number of children living in poverty	% of children living in poverty
Belfast West	1,140	4,020	1,330	16%	7,169	28.5%
Belfast North	1,030	3,580	1,200	14%	7,183	27.6%
Foyle	870	2,980	980	11%	6,122	22.9%
Newry and Armagh	1,020	3,610	1,190	11%	8,609	26.3%
West Tyrone	710	2,520	840	10%	5,341	22.2%
Upper Bann	970	3,410	1,150	10%	7,180	21.8%
Mid Ulster	840	2,960	990	10%	6,323	21.8%
East Londonderry	650	2,280	760	10%	5,254	22.4%
South Down	800	2,840	930	10%	6,930	23.5%
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	740	2,660	840	9%	6,363	22.4%



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The two-child limit has a big impact on the way I have to budget with all three of my children. Having a limited amount of money which has to be spread between three children means that all three children have to have less of what they may need. I can't let my youngest go without so have to budget accordingly which is so hard with the cost of living at the moment. **The two-child limit forces parents to provide less for all children rather than just having one child being affected.** I believe it's wrong to have a limit for some children as this increases the risk of many children having to go without. I understand there has to be limits in place however a little support per child would go along way.

Mum of three, London

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About the End Child Poverty Coalition

The End Child Poverty Coalition is made up of over 100 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.

Together we ask that this and future governments commit to end child poverty.

About the data

The data on the two-child limit was obtained via Freedom of Information requests to the Department of Work and Pensions, HMRC and the Department for Communities Northern Ireland. You can download the full spreadsheet of data here: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/>

The Local Child Poverty data is calculated each year by Loughborough University, for the End Child Poverty Coalition, and can be found here: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>

1 in 10 children

lives in a family which is impacted by the unfair, two child limit.



