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Local Authority Council Tax Support – Q2 2026 to 2027

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has published the latest statistical tables for 'Council Tax Support Q2 2026 to 2027'. This represents an update on the numbers of claimants of council tax support to the end of September 2026. The totals shown are split between pension age and working age claimants across local authorities and it is available as the fifth dataset here.

1.2 The figures represent a count of the numbers of council tax support claimants at the end of September 2026 and shows the count at the end of previous quarters back to 2015/16. It covers all 296 local authorities.

1.3 This note is structured as follows:

- Section 2 – Highlights the main messages arising from our analysis of the publication of claimants of council tax support to September 2026; and
- Section 3 – Provides a detailed analysis of claimant numbers published to the end of September 2026.

HUB Subscribers

1.4 The LG Futures' Resource Planning Hub includes further specific analysis on Council Tax Support including a tool that provides individual authority analysis of the changes over time including compared across other local authorities. This, together with other broader analysis around Council tax, is available to subscribers here.

1.5 If you would like more information about subscribing to the Hub, including the free places it offers at our webinars, please contact Lee Geraghty at lee.geraghty@lgfutures.co.uk.

2. Main messages

2.1. The main messages emerging from analysis of the publication of council tax support claimant numbers across 296 billing authorities to the end of Q2 2026/27 are as follows:

Overall claimant numbers

- The total number of claimants of council tax support at September 2026 was 3.646m, which was an annual increase of 0.1% on the previous September.
- Within an individual authority the largest reduction was 8.6% and the largest increase was 11.6%.
- 199 or 67% of authorities experienced an increase in the 12 months to September 2026 with an average rise across these councils of 1.9%.
- 97 or 33% of authorities experienced a decrease in the 12 months to September 2026 with an average reduction across these councils of 2.0%.

Working-age claimant numbers

- The total number of working-age claimants of council tax support at September 2026 was 2.306m, which was an annual increase of 0.8% on the previous September.
- A majority of 221 or 75% of authorities experienced an increase in the 12 months to September 2026. The average increase among these councils was 3.5% with forty-six of these councils experiencing a rise of 5% or more. The maximum annual increase was 22%.
- 74 or 25% of authorities experienced an annual decrease in the total number of working-age claimants. The average reduction among councils with a reduction was 2.9% with forty-one of these experiencing a decline of 2.5% or less. The largest annual reduction was 13.7%.
- There has been a quarterly increase of 0.7% in the number of working age claimants at September 2026, which follows a 0.1% increase in the previous quarter.

Pension-age claimant numbers

- The total number of pension-age claimants of council tax support at September 2026 was 1.340m, which was an annual decrease of 1.1%.
- The annual reduction to September 2026 of 1.1% is a higher reduction than in the previous twelve-month period in June (0.9%), but the decline is still well below long term trends.

3. Analysis of claimant numbers at September 2026

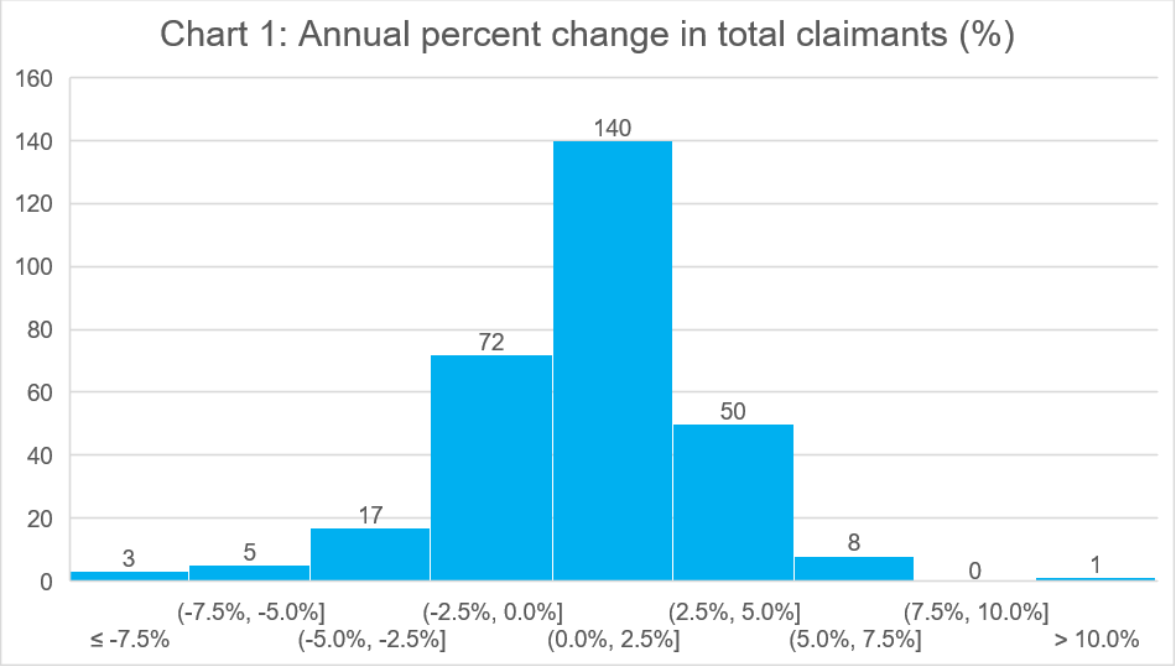
Overall claimant numbers

3.1. The total number of claimants of council tax support at September 2026 was 3.646m, which was an annual increase of 0.1% on the previous September.

3.2. The average decrease across those councils where there was a reduction in overall claimant numbers was 2.0%. The largest decrease in an individual authority was 8.6%.

3.3. The average increase across those councils where there was a rise in overall claimant numbers was 1.9%. The maximum individual authority increase was 11.6%.

3.4. Chart 1 shows the annual change in total claimant numbers across English local authorities.



3.5. Chart 1 shows that:

- 199 or 67% of authorities experienced an increase in the total number of claimants;
- 97 or 33% of authorities experienced an annual decrease in their total number of claimants;
- The largest group of 140 or 47% of authorities experienced a small increase of between 0% and 2.5%; and
- Nine of those authorities with an increase experienced a rise of over 5%.

3.6. This should be set against the context of the previous three years' annual changes in the 12 months to September of total claimant numbers which were:

- 2023/24 -1.6%
- 2024/25 -0.8%
- 2025/26 -1.5%
- 2026/27 0.1%

3.7. The 0.1% annual increase to September 2026 is a reversal on the decreases experienced in each of the previous three years.

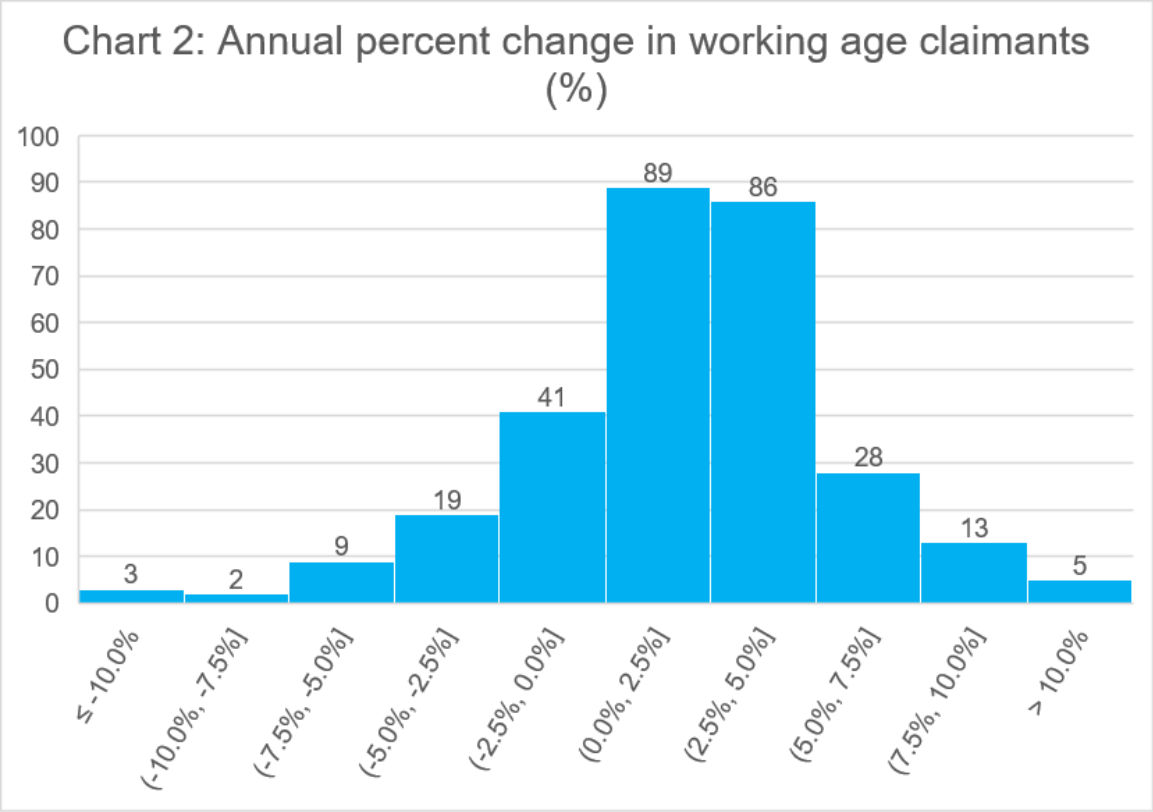
3.8. There was a quarter-to-quarter increase of 0.3%, which follows a 0.1% decrease in the previous quarter.

Working-age claimant numbers

3.9. The total number of working-age claimants of council tax support at September 2026 was 2.306m, which was an annual increase of 0.8% on the previous September.

3.10. The average decrease among those councils with reductions in working age claimants was 2.9% and the largest annual decrease was 13.7%. The average increase was 3.5% and the largest annual increase was 22%.

3.11. Chart 2 shows the annual change in working-age claimant numbers across English local authorities.



3.12. Chart 2 shows that:

- A majority of 221 or 75% of councils experienced an annual increase in the 12 months to September 2026. Of these, forty-six experienced an annual rise of 5% or more; and
- 74 councils or 25% experienced an annual decrease in the 12 months to September 2026 with forty-one of these councils experiencing an annual reduction of 2.5% or less.

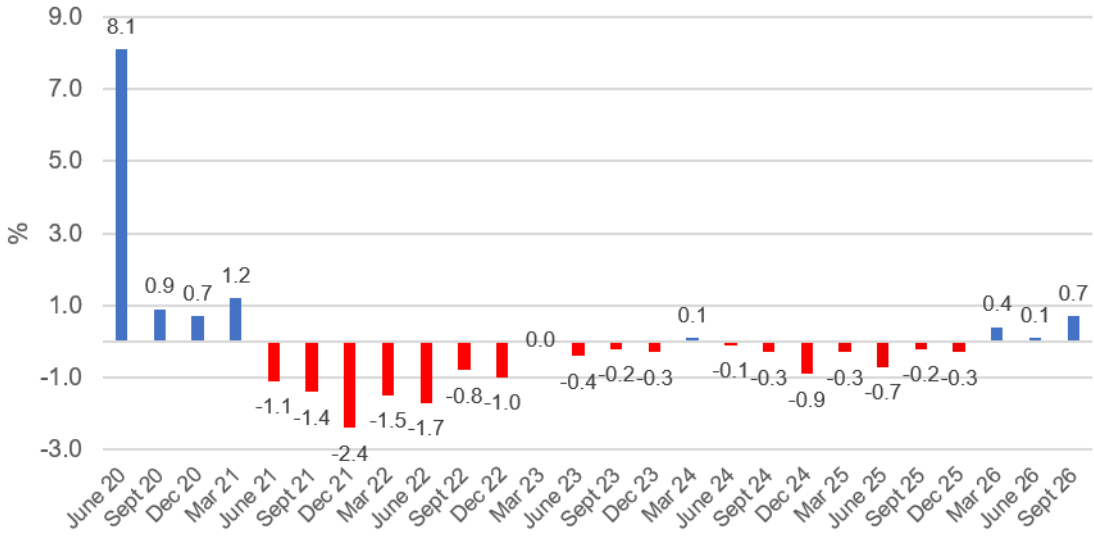
3.13. This should be set against the context of the previous three years' annual changes to working-age claimant numbers in the year to September which were:

- 2023/24 -1.7%
- 2024/25 -0.6%
- 2025/26 -2.1%
- 2026/27 0.8%

3.14. The increase in the number of working age claimants is a reversal compared to previous decreases.

3.15. Most of the increase in 2020/21 arose in just the one quarter, between the end of March 2020 and the end of June 2020, where there was an 8.1% increase in working age claimant numbers. Chart 3 shows an analysis of quarterly changes in working-age claimant numbers between June 2020 and September 2026.

Chart 3: Quarterly changes in working age claimant numbers (percent)



3.16. There was a quarterly increase of 0.7% in the number of working age claimants at September 2026 which follows on from increases in both the previous quarters. This represents the first time there have been three consecutive quarterly increases since March 2021.

3.17. The increases over the last three quarters has negated the previous three quarters reductions, with claimant numbers now close to the level reported in March 2025 (2.309m).

Pension-age claimant numbers

3.18. The total number of pension age claimants of council tax support at September 2026 was 1.340m, which was an annual decrease of 1.1% on the previous September.

3.19. 231 billing authorities or 78% of the total experienced reductions with an average decrease across these councils of 1.8%. 65 billing authorities (22%) experienced an increase in their pension age claimant numbers with an average increase of 1.2%.

3.20. This should be set against the context of the previous three years' annual changes to pension-age claimant numbers in September which were:

- 2023/24 -1.5%
- 2024/25 -1.0%
- 2025/26 -0.6%
- 2026/27 -1.1%

3.21. The annual reduction to September 2026 of 1.1%, is in line with average annual reduction in the previous three years and is greater than the previous annual reduction in June 2026 (0.9%). However, the decline is still well below longer term trends.