



1.2 million pensioner households primarily dependent on the State Pension, Just Group finds

- Three times more women than men in single pensioner households are largely dependent on the State Pension

Over a million retired households in the UK are largely dependent on the State Pension for their retirement income, according to analysis of ONS data¹ from retirement specialist Just Group.

The data reveals that 1.2 million retired households are “mainly reliant” on the State Pension, defined by the ONS as a household that has at least three quarters of its total income provided by the State Pension or other similar pension-related state benefits.

Single pensioners account for the majority of these households largely reliant on State Pension income, with a worrying gender imbalance showing that three times as many women (580,000) as men (180,000) rely primarily on the State Pension. Two-person retired households account for around 450,000 households largely reliant on State Pension.

The Pension and Lifetime Savings Association (PLSA) has calculated the annual Minimum Income Standard² for a single pensioner should be £12,800 a year. The State Pension is currently £10,600 creating a shortfall of £2,200 every year to meet the PLSA’s minimum standard.

Even with the projected 8.5% increase added by the triple lock taking the State Pension to around £11,500 per annum, pensioners reliant on the State Pension would still fall short of this minimum income standard by £1,300 every year.

Stephen Lowe, group communications director at retirement specialist Just Group, said: “The PLSA’s minimum income standard is more than £2,000 a year higher than the current State Pension and demonstrates the gap that over one million retirees, who are largely dependent on the State Pension, need to bridge to achieve a minimum standard of living.

“Filling this income gap presents a difficult task given this group of people are not of working age so going out to work and earning more is unlikely to be an option. It means those without any income beyond the State Pension are likely to have to find ways to cut their costs to the tune of £166 a month.

“This is a problem that affects women disproportionately – sadly we can’t say this is a surprise given all we know about the pension gender gap. There are twice as many women (412,300) over the age of 90 as men (197,220) in the UK³ and 72% of women in the UK aged 85 or older are widowed⁴.

“Checking benefit eligibility is an equally important step in ensuring a financially stable retirement, with the latest data⁵ on benefit take-up evidencing that just six in 10 people eligible for Pension Credit claimed it, leaving £2.1 billion of unclaimed support in 2022.

“Ultimately, however, the wide-spread financial fragility and state income dependence highlighted in our research places even greater pressure on the Chancellor to confirm the triple lock in Wednesday’s Autumn Statement. Maintaining the triple lock could be a lifeline for the vast number of pensioners whose livelihoods depend on the State Pension keeping up with costs of living.”

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Notes to Editors

1 – ONS, Expenditure of one and two adult retired households, mainly dependent on State Pensions, by sex of Household Reference Person

2 – PLSA, Retirement Living Standards: <https://www.retirementlivingstandards.org.uk/>

3 – Census 2021 and ONS, Estimates of the very old, including centenarians:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/bulletins/estimatesoftheveryoldincludingcentenarians/2002to2020>

4 – Census 2021, Profile of the older population living in England and Wales in 2021 and changes since 2011:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/profileoftheolderpopulationlivinginenglandandwalesin2021andchangessince2011/2023-04-03#data-sources-and-quality>

5 – ONS, Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

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