



# Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI)

## Briefing for MSPs – Spring 2026

### Latest update

- In **January 2026**, the UK Government refused to compensate WASPI women for a second time. The Work and Pensions Secretary announced this decision in Parliament, relying on nearly identical reasoning to the previous refusal that was withdrawn following WASPI's legal challenge
- **WASPI is exploring options for a fresh judicial review:** When WASPI challenged the December 2024 refusal, permission for the case to proceed to a full hearing was granted on all bases. WASPI secured more than half of its legal costs from the UK Government, providing a significant war chest for future action
- **Two-thirds of 18–34-year-olds support fair WASPI compensation** in a January 2026 poll. A majority of MPs in Westminster support the campaign, recognising this transcends party politics. WASPI women are not going away and will continue fighting for the justice they deserve

WASPI want the **UK Government to think again** and to compensate affected women. All MPs in Westminster should be given the opportunity to have their say, through a debate and vote in UK Government time.

### The PHSO's instructions to the UK Government

- In March 2024, the PHSO found maladministration in the way the DWP **failed to properly communicate increases** to women's State Pension age
  - As a result, many women born in the 1950s were left with little time to make alternative retirement plans and suffered injustice
- The PHSO **asked MPs in Westminster to intervene to deliver compensation** at Level 4 on their financial remedy scale (£1,000-£2,950) to those affected
- In December 2024, the DWP **apologised for its mistakes**, and accepted the PHSO's finding of maladministration, but nonetheless refused to set up a compensation scheme

### What has happened since the December 2024 refusal to pay compensation

- In February 2025, WASPI announced it was seeking a **High Court judicial review** of the UK Government's decision, arguing the DWP failed to base its conclusions on cogent or rational reasons
- In December 2025, just days before the case was set to be heard, WASPI reached a **legal settlement with the UK Government** which committed them to: (a) completely reconsider their response within 12 weeks; (b) consider the whole decision afresh, looking at all relevant evidence; and (c) to pay more than half of WASPI's legal costs
- The settlement exposed that **key DWP research had been withheld from ministers when** making the December 2024 decision – the DWP accepted this and agreed to review their position
- **In January 2026, the Work and Pensions Secretary announced that compensation would once again be refused.** The DWP's reasoning relies heavily on the same flawed arguments from December 2024

### Why the DWP is wrong

- The PHSO identified, through internal DWP memos in 2005, that **officials knew considerable numbers of women were unaware** of planned State Pension age changes – they failed to act on their own research to remedy this – and the PHSO said this failure was maladministration



- **Women were denied the ability to make informed decisions**, while losing their sense of personal autonomy and financial control
- The UK Government can disagree with the PHSO, but they must do so on “**cogent**” reasons
  - WASPI believes relying on surveys which do not accurately reflect the impact on 1950s-born women, as well as various assumptions, are not cogent or rational

### WASPI’s response to the UK Government’s position

- **“Most women knew the State Pension age was increasing”**
  - A claim that 90% of affected women knew of changes to their State Pension age in 2006 is from a survey. This refers to a general awareness across the whole population about future changes to the State Pension, not about the specific impact of them as individuals
  - The survey was also not representative of the affected cohort. Around 200 women born in the 1950s were asked, out of a total sample size of 1,950 people
  - Elsewhere within the PHSO’s report, research found that only 43% of all women affected by the changes knew their State Pension age was 65, or between 60 and 65 years
- **“Paying compensation is too expensive”**
  - The PHSO said that financial circumstances are not an excuse for not paying compensation. Compensation payments could be phased over a number of years e.g. the life of a Parliament
  - Alleged financial mismanagement by previous administrations is not an excuse and the Treasury has saved £181bn by increasing women’s State Pension age
- **“The UK Government’s decision is the right and fair thing to do”**
  - The PHSO concluded that WASPI women are owed compensation. To ignore this sets a dangerous precedent as the job of ombudsmen is to ensure effective checks and balances on government
  - This now leaves the door open for private companies to ignore the decisions of the ombudsmen e.g. banks with financial ombudsmen if they find their conclusions inconvenient

### PHSO’s response to the UK Government’s position

- The Deputy Ombudsman told the Work and Pensions Select Committee he welcomed the UK Government’s acceptance of maladministration but that they had **unhelpfully undermined its report** by “*picking out some aspects of the surveys but not all the surveys*”
- He explained “*In the end, the fundamentals in making a decision here are that the **DWP itself at the time knew that the women who it wanted to know did not know***” and the DWP failed to act
- He continued “*The Government at the time considered it right to send letters to people to increase awareness. It did not do it. That is the maladministration.*”

### The route to compensation

- The PHSO is tasked with **holding the UK Government of the day to account** – what does it say if their judgements can be ignored if they are too inconvenient?
- All six test cases examined by the PHSO were judged to have suffered Level 4 (£1,000-£2,950). The PHSO confirmed to the Work and Pensions Select Committee (May 2024) that there could be different impacts including **direct financial loss** on those cases not examined within their investigation
- Any financial remedy should allocate the most compensation to those who had the **shortest notice of the longest delay to their State Pension age**



- The Committee recommended a **two-pronged approach**, offering a standard sum based on length of delay and amount of notice of the change to all WASPI women, and an additional layer of compensation to be obtained by application only for those who suffered additional losses

### Latest statistics

- Polling carried out in early 2026 of 2,095 UK adults found:
  - **66% of 18-34 year-olds** back compensation for WASPI women
  - **77% of the public** say people affected by maladministration should receive redress without taking legal action

### What the UK Government should do now

1. Accept the injustice the Parliamentary Ombudsman identified and agree to right that wrong by providing compensation
2. Give all MPs in Westminster the opportunity to debate and vote on compensating WASPI women in UK Government time

### What MSPs can do now

- **Write to the Work and Pensions Secretary Pat McFadden MP** asking him to rethink his position on compensating WASPI women
- **Ask the Scottish First Minister to write to the UK Prime Minister** in support of WASPI compensation

### About WASPI

WASPI calls for fair compensation for the lack of notice 1950s-born women received over increases to their State Pension age. This resulted in serious financial losses, and sustained damage to their mental health and wellbeing. WASPI does *not* campaign for the retirement age for women to return to 60, nor does it take issue with the law change itself.

For further information, please contact [campaign@waspi.co.uk](mailto:campaign@waspi.co.uk)