

Factsheet 19

State Pension

April 2026

Inside this factsheet

This factsheet has information about the new State Pension for people reaching State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016. It also has information about the old State Pension for people who reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016.

If you are a man born before 6 April 1945 or a woman born before 6 April 1950, your State Pension is not covered in this factsheet. Seek specialist advice for more information.

From April 2026, State Pension age starts increasing gradually and will reach 67 by 6 March 2028 (affecting anyone born between 6 April 1960 and 5 April 1977). For more information see section 2. You can check your own State Pension age at www.gov.uk/state-pension-age or phone the Future Pension Centre on 0800 731 0175.

The factsheet explains how to claim your pension and what to do if you have a change of circumstance.

The information in this factsheet is correct for the period April 2026 to March 2027.

Benefit rates are reviewed annually and updated in April but rules and figures can sometimes change during the year.

The information in this factsheet is applicable to Great Britain.

Contact details for any of the organisations mentioned in this factsheet can be found in the *Useful organisations* section.

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Glossary

AA – Attendance Allowance	DWP – Department for Work and Pensions
ADP – Adult Disability Payment (Scotland)	EEA – European Economic Area
AIP – Assessed Income Period	ESA – Employment and Support Allowance
CA – Carer’s Allowance	HB – Housing Benefit
CDP – Child Disability Payment (Scotland)	JSA – Jobseeker’s Allowance
CSP – Carer Support Payment (Scotland)	PC – Pension Credit
CTR – Council Tax Reduction/Support	PIP – Personal Independence Payment
DLA – Disability Living Allowance	UC – Universal Credit

1 What is State Pension?

State Pension can be paid when you reach State Pension age, as long as you meet the National Insurance contribution conditions and make a claim. The amount you are entitled to is not affected by your income and capital but it is taxable.

This factsheet focuses on the new State Pension which was introduced on 6 April 2016 for people reaching State Pension age on or after that date. This applies to:

- men born on or after 6 April 1951
- women born on or after 6 April 1953.

If you were born before these dates, you remain on the pre-2016 State Pension schemes. Men born between 6 April 1945 and 5 April 1951 and woman born between 6 April 1950 and 5 April 1953 come under the old State Pension, see section 11.

If you were a man born before 6 April 1945 or a woman born before 6 April 1950, you come under another State Pension scheme. You should seek specialist advice if you have specific queries, as the rules are more complex and they are not covered in this factsheet.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for State Pensions and other benefits. Older people deal mainly with the Pension Service which is part of the DWP. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) deal with National Insurance (NI) contributions.

The new State Pension full amount is £241.30 a week for 2026/27. The amount you get is usually based on NI contributions you paid during your working life or NI Credits (given when claiming certain benefits). To receive the full amount, you need 35 full years of NI contributions. You may receive more or less than the full amount.

If you have between 10 and 34 years of NI contributions and credits, you receive a proportionately lower amount. If you have less than 10 years contributions, you are not entitled at all. For contributions made before 6 April 2016, transitional arrangements apply that protect any higher entitlement from your pre-2016 record, see section 4 for more. These can increase your State Pension to more than the full amount. For information on what counts as NI contributions, see section 5.

Note

There are exceptions to these rules if you are entitled to very little State Pension based on your own NI contributions. This could be because you paid married women's or widow's reduced-rate NI contributions, or you are widowed, or your civil partner has died.

See section 8 for information about increasing or inheriting State Pension from a spouse or civil partner.

2 State Pension age

From 6 May 2026, State Pension age starts increasing gradually. This affects anyone born between 6 April 1960 and 5 April 1977. State Pension age is 66 plus one month for those born between 6 April 1960 to 5 May 1960 and will continue to increase by one month each calendar month until it reaches age 67 by 6 March 2028 for those born between 6 March 1961 to 5 April 1977.

You can find out your own State Pension age and the date you reach it by using the calculator at www.gov.uk/calculate-state-pension or by phoning the Future Pension Centre on 0800 731 0175. For more information, see www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/pensions/state-pension/changes-to-state-pension-age

3 Current rates

The full weekly rate for new State Pension in 2026/27 is:

New State Pension	£241.30
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The full weekly rates for the old State Pension are:

Category A pension	£184.90
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Category B pension based on late spouse's or civil partner's National Insurance contributions	£184.90
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Category B pension based on spouse's or civil partner's National Insurance contributions	£110.75
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Category D non-contributory pension	£110.75
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3.1 State Pension forecast

You can request a State Pension forecast. This estimates how much your State Pension will be, based on your current NI record. It includes:

- the date you reach State Pension age
- an estimate of State Pension based on your NI record to date
- the number of qualifying years you currently have.

Action

Anyone over 18 can get an estimate from www.gov.uk/check-state-pension or if you are over 50, you can request a paper forecast by calling the Future Pension Centre on 0800 731 0175.

If the estimate shows you do not have enough qualifying years to get a full State Pension, ask if you can make up the shortfall before reaching State Pension age.

If not, ask HMRC for a NI statement, check this and query any gaps. Consider paying voluntary NI contributions to make up gaps (see section 12.4).

4 Calculating the amount

Any NI contributions or credits you have before 6 April 2016 are used to calculate a '*starting amount*'. Your starting amount is the higher of the State Pension amount you would have received based on:

- your own NI record under old State Pension rules (including basic and additional pension elements), or
- the new State Pension rules as if they were in place at the start of your working life.

However, a deduction is made from both calculations if you were in a contracted-out personal or workplace pension scheme prior to 2016, for example, as a member of a public-sector pension scheme. If you were contracted out, you either paid lower NI contributions, or some of your NI contributions were paid towards your other pension instead of Additional State Pension (also known as State Second Pension or SERPS).

Remember

To receive any amount of State Pension, you must have at least 10 years NI contributions. There are exceptions – see section 8 about increasing or inheriting Pension from a spouse or civil partner.

4.1 If your starting amount is less than the full amount

You may be able to receive a higher rate of State Pension by adding more qualifying years to your NI record until you reach the full amount or you reach State Pension age, whichever is first. Each qualifying year on your NI record adds $\frac{1}{35}^{\text{th}}$ of the full amount (£6.89 a week) to your new State Pension entitlement. See section 12 for how to increase your NI record.

Example

Your starting amount from your pre-April 2016 NI record is £120.00 a week. You add five qualifying years to your NI record before reaching State Pension age (each adding £6.89), equalling £34.45 a week. You are paid £154.45 a week State Pension when you claim.

4.2 If your starting amount is more than the full amount

If your starting amount is more than the full State Pension amount, the extra amount is called your '*protected payment*'. This is paid on top of your new State Pension when you claim and increases each year in line with inflation.

If you are already over the full new State Pension amount, any qualifying years added to your NI record before reaching State Pension age do not add anything to the amount of your State Pension.

4.3 No NI contributions/credits prior to 6 April 2016

Your State Pension is calculated entirely under new State Pension rules. You must have at least 10 qualifying years on your NI record to get new State Pension (there are exceptions – see section 8 about increasing or inheriting Pension from a spouse or civil partner). Your new State Pension is more likely to be calculated in this way if you were born after the year 2000 or became a resident of the UK after 2015.

5 National Insurance (NI)

Your NI record can be made up from any combination of:

- NI contributions paid while employed or self-employed
- NI contributions paid voluntarily
- NI credits awarded while receiving certain benefits
- NI credits and/or Home Responsibilities Protection awarded due to caring responsibilities.

Section 1 details what you may be entitled to, based on the number of years on your NI record.

For information about different types of NI contributions and making voluntary payments, see section 12.

6 How to claim State Pension

You do not get State Pension automatically – you need to make a claim.

You should get a letter no later than two months before reaching State Pension age, with information about the ways you can claim. The letter has an invitation code to use if you choose to make your claim online. If you do not have your letter or the invitation code, you can request a new one at www.gov.uk/get-state-pension.

If you have not received a letter, you can phone the claim line below and they can discuss what you need to do. If you are within four months of reaching your State Pension age, you can make a claim. You need your NI number and you may need proof of your date of birth.

You can claim in the following ways.

Online

Go to www.gov.uk/get-state-pension to make your claim using your invitation code. There is an online helpdesk to help you through the process if you have difficulty, or you can phone:

- Telephone: 0800 169 0154
- Welsh language: 0800 169 0253

Phone

Call the State Pension claim line to ask for a claim form to be sent out:

- Telephone: 0800 731 7898
- Welsh language: 0800 731 7936
- Relay UK (if you cannot hear or speak on the phone): 18001 then 0800 731 7898

Download the claim form

If you are claiming an old State Pension (men born before 6 April 1951 or women born before 6 April 1953), you can download a copy of the claim form at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-basic-state-pension

Action

If you have lost your NI number, call the National Insurance helpline on 0300 200 3500 or Textphone on 0300 200 3519.

6.1 Advance claims and backdating

You can claim your State Pension up to four months in advance. It is a good idea to claim in advance as it may take a while for your claim to be processed.

State Pension can be backdated for up to 12 months, but a claim cannot be backdated to a date before you reached State Pension age. You are not paid interest on any backdated lump sum. You do not need to show any special reasons for backdating – you can just make the request when you claim.

If you claim more than 12 months after your State Pension age birthday, you are treated as if you deferred your claim (see next section).

If you decide to ask for backdating when you have deferred your State Pension claim, you reduce the amount of your ongoing deferred State Pension payments. You may wish to seek independent advice to check what your best option is.

6.2 Putting off or deferring State Pension

When you reach State Pension age, you can put off or 'defer' claiming State Pension, which means you may receive a higher rate of State Pension later on. If you start receiving State Pension, it is possible to change your mind and start to defer it, but this can only be done once.

To defer, you need to wait for at least nine weeks after reaching State Pension age before making a claim. Your new State Pension increases by one per cent for every nine weeks you defer or about 5.8 per cent for a full year. You can defer claiming for as long as you like.

The increased amount is paid on top of your new State Pension when you start claiming and counts as taxable income. You cannot take the extra amount as a lump sum payment and if you die before your spouse or civil partner, they cannot inherit any of the increase.

This may not be right for everyone and whether you gain overall depends on your specific circumstances.

In particular, if you or your partner claim means-tested benefits such as Pension Credit, or Universal Credit, you do not receive any increase for each whole week in which you receive the other benefit. The unclaimed State Pension also counts as notional income for means-tested benefits.

Action

If you are thinking about deferring your State Pension, it is important to consider the full implications, especially if you claim other benefits. Seek advice from Age UK Advice if so.

In **Wales**, contact Age Cymru Advice and in **Scotland**, contact Age Scotland.

7 Decisions and payments

Once your claim has been processed, the Pension Service send you a decision notice including details of how much your State Pension will be, how and when it will be paid and your duty to report relevant changes in your circumstances, and how to challenge the decision if you disagree.

7.1 If you disagree with a decision

If you think you have been awarded the wrong amount or disagree with a decision about your State Pension, you can ask for a '*mandatory reconsideration*' and the decision will be looked at again.

If you are still unhappy with the decision after mandatory reconsideration, you can appeal to an independent tribunal. There are time limits that apply, so it is important to act quickly. See Age UK factsheet 74, *Challenging welfare benefit decisions*, for more information.

7.2 Payment

When you apply for your State Pension, you are given information about the different types of bank or building society accounts it can be paid into. State Pension is usually paid four-weekly in arrears, although you can ask to be paid weekly or fortnightly.

State Pension can be paid to an appointee who acts on your behalf if you are not able to act for yourself.

If you cannot open or manage an account, it can be paid by a system called the *Payment Exception Service*, which is collected from PayPoint outlets located in local shops.

You can authorise someone else to collect your money from a bank, building society or PayPoint outlet. If you are unsure about your payment options, a local advice agency may be able to help.

Payment starts from the day you reach State Pension age, unless you are in the old State Pension system, when it can be up to a week later.

8 Increasing or inheriting Pension from spouse or civil partner

New State Pension is normally based on your own NI record only. However, you may be able to inherit an extra payment from your spouse or civil partner or qualify for a higher amount if you paid married women's or widow's reduced rate NI contributions.

Note

You cannot inherit any part of a spouse or civil partner's State Pension if you remarry or form a new civil partnership before reaching State Pension age.

8.1 Additional State Pension and Graduated Retirement Benefit

You can inherit part of a deceased spouse's or civil partner's Additional State Pension and half their Graduated Retirement Benefit once you start claiming your own State Pension if **both**:

- your marriage or civil partnership began before 6 April 2016, **and**
- you could have inherited these amounts in the old pre-2016 system, and **either**:
- your partner reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016, **or**
- they died before 6 April 2016 but would have reached State Pension age on or after that date.

8.2 Inheriting a protected payment

You can inherit half of a partner's protected payment once you start claiming your own State Pension if your marriage or civil partnership began before 6 April 2016 and **both** the following apply:

- they reached, or would have reached, State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016, and
- they died on or after 6 April 2016.

8.3 Inheriting a deferral payment

If a spouse or civil partner reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016 and they received extra State Pension due to deferral, you may inherit some of their extra State Pension once you start claiming your State Pension. **Both** of the following must apply:

- you were married or in a civil partnership when your partner died, and
- you did not remarry or form a new civil partnership before you reached State Pension age.

8.4 Women who paid reduced rate contributions

Until April 1977, married women could choose to pay a reduced rate of NI contributions (known as the '*married women's stamp*'). Even after this date, anyone already doing so could continue paying the reduced rate.

Reduced rate contributions affect entitlement to contributory benefits and they do not help you to qualify for State Pension.

The right to pay reduced rate contributions ends immediately on divorce, or if you choose to give up the right and start paying the full rate. It also stops automatically if you stop working or at the end of two complete tax years during which you earn below the Lower Earnings Limit (£129 per week in 2026/27).

If you are a woman with little or no State Pension entitlement because of reduced rate contributions, you can still qualify for State Pension without the minimum 10 years of ordinary NI contributions.

If your right to pay reduced-rate contributions applied at some point in the 35 years before the start of the tax year when you reach State Pension age, you may get a State Pension that is either:

- £110.75 a week - if you are married or in a civil partnership and your partner has reached State Pension age, or
- £184.90 a week - if you are widowed, divorced, or your civil partnership was dissolved.

Continues overleaf.

You get any Additional State Pension and Graduated Retirement Benefit built up before 6 April 2016 on top. This is paid when:

- you or your spouse or civil partner reach State Pension age (whichever is later), or
- you reach State Pension age – if you are widowed or divorced, or
- you are widowed, divorced or your civil partnership is dissolved after you reach State Pension age.

You get this amount if it is more than you would be paid under new State Pension rules based on your own NI record.

8.5 Divorce or dissolved civil partnership

A court can make a '*pension sharing order*' if you get divorced or dissolve your civil partnership.

You get an extra payment on top of your State Pension if your ex-partner is ordered to share their Additional State Pension or protected payment with you.

Your State Pension is reduced if you are ordered to share your Additional State Pension or protected payment with your ex-partner.

9 Change in your circumstances

You must report all changes in your circumstances that might affect State Pension to the Pension Service.

9.1 Going abroad or living there

State Pension continues to be paid if you go abroad. If you move abroad, you can arrange for State Pension to be paid in the country where you live. If you remain abroad, the annual State Pension increase is only paid if you live in a European Economic Area (EEA) country, Gibraltar, Switzerland, or a country the UK has a special agreement with.

Note

For more information about receiving your State Pension while living abroad, see www.gov.uk/state-pension-if-you-retire-abroad/rates-of-state-pension or contact the International Pension Centre.

9.2 Going into hospital

State Pension can continue to be paid for as long as you are in hospital.

If you receive a disability benefit like Attendance Allowance (AA) and State Pension, the disability benefit can be affected by a hospital stay so you should still tell the DWP.

9.3 Going into a care home

State Pension is not affected if you go into a care home but it is taken into account as income if the local authority help pay your fees.

Note

In Scotland, this does not affect free personal and nursing care. For more information, in **England**, see Age UK factsheet 10, *Paying for permanent residential care*. In **Scotland**, see Age Scotland guide, *Care Home Guide: funding*. In **Wales**, see Age Cymru factsheet 10w, *Paying for a permanent care home placement in Wales*.

10 Other entitlements at retirement

The age when you can claim State Pension may not be the same as the age you retire from work. You may stop work before or continue working after State Pension age, or you might want to retire gradually, for example by reducing your hours rather than leaving work completely.

10.1 Stopping work before reaching State Pension age

You may be entitled to other benefits. See Age UK factsheet 56, *Benefits for people under State Pension age*, for more information.

If you are not paying NI contributions, check if you have enough contributions to be eligible for a full State Pension. Check if you can get NI credits or pay voluntary contributions to increase your State Pension. See section 3.1 for more information.

Occupational and personal pensions

You may qualify for an occupational or private pension before State Pension age – check with your employer or provider. See Age UK factsheet 91, *Pension Freedom and benefits*, for more information.

10.2 Working after State Pension age

If you work and get State Pension, the amount you receive is not affected or reduced by your earnings or hours. However, State Pension does count as taxable income. Your tax code is adjusted to take into account the amount of State Pension you get. See Age UK factsheet 12, *Planning your retirement: money and tax*, for more information.

If you work for an employer after State Pension age, you do not have to pay NI contributions. Tell your employer who must continue to pay contributions for you. If you are self-employed, you must continue paying Class 4 contributions until the end of the tax year in which you reach State Pension age. For more information, see www.gov.uk/tax-national-insurance-after-state-pension-age/stopping-paying-national-insurance

Unemployment and sickness

If you become sick or unemployed after State Pension age, you cannot usually claim a '*working age*' benefit such as Universal Credit, unless your partner is under State Pension age. You may be able to get Statutory Sick Pay from your employer. You may be eligible for Pension Credit if you work and have a low income. See Age UK factsheet 48, *Pension Credit*, for more information.

Occupational and personal pensions

If you have a private pension pot, you may be able to access payments while you work – contact your pension scheme for more information or see Age UK factsheet 91, *Pension Freedom and benefits*.

10.3 Other benefits after State Pension age

You may be entitled to claim other benefits, for example, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction/Support. You may be entitled even if you work, but it depends on the level of your income and savings.

You may be entitled to Attendance Allowance or Pension Age Disability Payment (Scotland) which help with the extra costs of a long-term illness or disability.

Some benefits '*overlap*' with State Pension, including Carer's Allowance (CA) or Carer's Support Payment (CSP) in Scotland, for people caring for someone else. These benefits are not paid if your State Pension pays more than CA/CSP, although you retain an '*underlying entitlement*' to them. If you claim Pension Credit, an underlying entitlement to CA/CSP means a carer's addition is included in your Pension Credit.

If you receive a Widow's or War Widow's Pension when you reach State Pension age, you may be better off remaining on these rather than claiming State Pension. Contact the Pension Service if this applies.

11 Old State Pension

You come under old State Pension rules if you reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016. See section 3 for the rates of old State Pension.

Some of these rules are the same as for new State Pension, including:

- State Pension forecast (section 3.1)
- How to claim your State Pension (section 6)
- Decisions and payments (section 7)
- Change in your circumstances (section 9)
- Other entitlements at retirement (section 10)

Other aspects of the old State Pension work quite differently to the new State Pension rules so read this section carefully. See overleaf for more.

Your old State Pension can be made up of a combination of:

- Basic State Pension (section 11.1)
- Additional State Pension (section 11.2)
- Graduated Retirement Benefit (section 11.2)
- Other payments (section 11.3).

11.1 Basic State Pension

Category A Pension on your own NI contributions

You get the full basic Category A State Pension (£184.90 a week) if you were paid or credited with 30 years of NI contributions. If you do not have enough qualifying years for a full Category A State Pension, you get a reduced amount. See section 11.4 for details of the NI contribution conditions.

Category B Pension on spouse or civil partner's NI contributions

You may be entitled to an increase of State Pension based on the NI record of a current or former spouse or civil partner, or a deceased spouse or civil partner. See section 11.6 for more information.

Category D non-contributory Pension

This is a non-contributory State Pension for people aged 80 or over (although you must have reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016). If you receive a low State Pension, Category D pension can top it up to £110.75 a week. This can also apply if you were previously not entitled to State Pension at all.

To qualify, you must live in the UK on your 80th birthday or the date of your claim if later and have lived in the UK for 10 years or more in any 20-year period after your 60th birthday. In some circumstances, you may be eligible if you lived in another EEA country.

11.2 Additional State Pension

If you get a Category A or B State Pension, you may get Additional State Pension (ASP). You can qualify for ASP even if you do not get any basic State Pension. The maximum amount of ASP is £230.54 a week.

From 1978 to 2002, ASP was built up under the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS), and from April 2002, under the State Second Pension (S2P), based on earnings above the Lower Earnings Limit (LEL).

LEL is the income threshold above which you are treated as paying NI contributions as an employee (see section 12.1).

State Second Pension

Employees with earnings above the limit were entitled to an extra earnings-related payment. You can be treated as though your earnings were equal to this if, throughout the year, you were:

- entitled to Carer's Allowance
- entitled to long-term Incapacity Benefit (or would have been if you satisfied contribution conditions)
- paid Severe Disablement Allowance
- paid contributory Employment and Support Allowance in some cases
- awarded Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP) (see section 12.3)
- receiving credits as a carer or foster carer or receiving Child Benefit for a child under the age of 12 (only since April 2010 – see section 12.3).

To qualify for a year of State Second Pension prior to April 2010, you had to fulfil one of the criteria for a whole tax year. For example, you could not qualify if you provided care for part of a year and met the disability conditions for the rest of the year, or paid NI contributions for part of the year and were awarded HRP for the rest of it.

Contracting out of the Additional State Pension

When calculating ASP, a deduction is made if you were in a '*contracted out*' personal or workplace pension scheme (see section 12.2).

Graduated Retirement Benefit

This taxable pension scheme, sometimes called '*Graduated Pension*', existed from April 1961 to April 1975 and was based on graduated contributions paid from earnings.

11.3 Other State Pension payments

Age addition

An extra 25p a week is paid in addition to Category A and B pensions if you are aged 80 or over.

Christmas bonus

If you receive State Pension and live in the UK during the qualifying week (normally the first full week of December), you receive an automatic Christmas bonus of £10. The bonus is tax-free and has no effect on other benefits.

11.4 National Insurance

The amount of old State Pension you are entitled to depends on your NI contributions record. You can receive the full amount of a Category A State Pension if you have 30 or more qualifying years.

If you have fewer than 30 qualifying years, you get a reduced pension provided you have at least one qualifying year. Each qualifying year entitles you to 1/30th of the full amount.

If you do not get the full amount, you may be able to increase your State Pension by relying on a spouse or civil partner (see section 11.6) or by paying voluntary NI contributions (see section 12.4). For more information about NI contributions and credits, see section 12.

11.5 Putting off or deferring State Pension

If you chose to put off or defer claiming State Pension, you can get extra State Pension or a lump sum at a later date when you do claim.

For every five weeks you defer, your weekly entitlement increases by one per cent. This works out at about 10.4 per cent for each full year of deferral, so deferring your State Pension claim for five years increases it by just over half. There are no time limits for how long you can defer.

Alternatively, instead of a higher rate of State Pension, you can get a taxable lump-sum payment plus State Pension paid at the normal weekly rate.

The lump sum is calculated based on the amount of unpaid State Pension and a compounded interest rate of two per cent above Bank of England base rate.

You must defer State Pension for at least 12 consecutive months to have the choice of a lump-sum payment.

Category B pensions

If you are entitled to a Category B State Pension or an increase to your State Pension based on your spouse or civil partner's contributions, you could claim this, even if they deferred their own State Pension.

Instead, you may have chosen to defer your own State Pension and so get extra State Pension or a lump sum when you start to claim.

If your partner defers their State Pension and you claim a Category A State Pension on your own contributions, or certain other benefits, you do not usually get extra State Pension or a lump-sum payment for deferring a Category B State Pension.

11.6 Increasing or inheriting from spouse or civil partner

You can sometimes increase or inherit State Pension based on your spouse or civil partner's NI contribution record when you reach State Pension age, known as a Category B State Pension. If you get a State Pension this way, you can remarry, form a civil partnership, or live with a partner without losing your entitlement.

Some rules are different for widowers and civil partners who reached State Pension age before April 2010. Contact the Pension Service or a local advice agency if this applies to you.

Women married to men

If you are a married woman not entitled to a basic State Pension based on your own NI record, or it is less than £110.75 a week, you may be able to get a Category B State Pension. This is based on your husband's NI record once he reaches State Pension age, sometimes called the '*married woman's pension*'. If your husband does not have a full contribution record, you receive a proportion of it.

If you already receive a Category A State Pension based on your own NI contributions and your husband claims his State Pension, you are normally paid any extra Category B State Pension you are entitled to, so you do not need to make a new claim. You must claim if you do not get State Pension when your husband reaches State Pension age. You must claim if your husband defers claiming State Pension, whether you receive State Pension or not.

Married men, women married to women and civil partners

If you are a married man, or a woman married to another woman or a civil partner, and your spouse or civil partner was born before 6 April 1950, you are not able to claim State Pension based on your spouse's or civil partner's NI contributions record.

If your spouse or your civil partner was born after 6 April 1950, has reached State Pension age, and you reached State Pension age after 6 April 2010 (and are not entitled to basic State Pension of at least £110.75 a week based on your own NI contributions record), you can claim a Category B State Pension based on their NI contributions record.

Note

The rate of £110.75 a week is called a '*lower rate Category B State Pension*' and applies if you are currently married or in a civil partnership. If you are widowed, divorced, or your civil partnership has been dissolved, see the sections below as you may be entitled to a '*basic rate Category B State Pension*' of up to £184.90 a week.

If you qualify for a Category B State Pension as a spouse or civil partner, the rules are in line with those for women married to men.

If you are widowed or a surviving civil partner

If you did not remarry or form a civil partnership before reaching State Pension age, you may be able to use their NI contributions to increase your basic State Pension up to a maximum of £184.90 a week.

This applies if you had reached State Pension age when your partner died. The amount depends on your own, and your late spouse's or civil partner's, NI contributions record.

If you are divorced

If you are divorced but do not qualify for a full Category A State Pension, you may be able to use your former spouse's contributions to increase the amount of basic State Pension to the maximum of £184.90 a week.

Your former spouse's NI contributions record up to when your marriage ended is substituted for your own, either from the start of your working life up to your divorce, or just for the period of your marriage.

If you remarried or formed a civil partnership before State Pension age, you cannot claim a State Pension on your former spouse's NI contributions record. However, if you did so after State Pension age, you do not lose any State Pension based on your previous spouse's NI contributions record.

If your civil partnership has been dissolved

The term '*dissolution*' is used if civil partners legally separate - it is the equivalent of divorce for married couples. State Pension rules are the same as those described for divorced people.

If you separate

If you separate from your husband, wife, or civil partner and you do not qualify for a basic Category A State Pension, or you are entitled to less than £110.75 a week, you may be able to claim a Category B State Pension of up to £110.75 a week when your spouse or civil partner reaches State Pension age.

11.7 Inheriting Additional State Pension

If your spouse or civil partner dies, you may be able to inherit some or all of their Additional State Pension. The amount you inherit is added to any Additional State Pension on your own contributions, up to the maximum amount a single person could have built up.

In some circumstances, different rules apply for inheriting Additional State Pension, depending on whether you are a woman whose husband has died or a widowed man, a woman whose female spouse has died, or a surviving civil partner. If this applies, seek specialist advice or contact the Pension Service.

If your spouse or civil partner died before you reached State Pension age

The rules are the same for widows, widowers and surviving civil partners. Providing you did not remarry or form a new civil partnership before reaching State Pension age, you may be able to inherit Additional State Pension.

If your spouse or civil partner dies after you reach State Pension age

You may inherit Additional State Pension if both you and your late spouse or civil partner were over State Pension age when they died. If your spouse or civil partner dies when under State Pension age, you cannot inherit Additional State Pension, unless you are a woman whose husband has died, or you reached State Pension age on or after 6 April 2010.

11.8 Inheriting a deferred State Pension

If your wife or civil partner received extra State Pension when they died because they deferred their State Pension, you may inherit some of their extra State Pension. If they died while still deferring State Pension, you can choose to receive either a one-off taxable lump-sum payment, or extra weekly state pension if they deferred for at least 12 months.

If you are deferring your own State Pension, you receive any inherited deferral payment when you start claiming your State Pension.

If you were widowed or your civil partner died before you reached State Pension age, you can only inherit a deferral payment if you did not remarry or form a new civil partnership before State Pension age.

Note

If you are a widower or surviving civil partner who reached State Pension age before 6 April 2010, you must have been over State Pension age when your spouse or civil partner died for these provisions to apply to you.

12 National insurance contributions and credits

This section explains the types of National Insurance contributions and credits you can use towards new and old State Pension entitlement.

12.1 Checking your NI record

Check for gaps in your NI record by requesting a statement from HMRC. You can do this online at www.gov.uk/check-national-insurance-record or call the helpline on 0300 200 3500. Request a State Pension forecast for an estimate of how much you will get when you claim. See section 3.1 for more information.

12.2 NI contributions in work

Employees between 16 years of age and State Pension age pay NI contributions depending on the level of their earnings.

You do not start to pay NI contributions until your earnings reach £242 a week. If you earn between £129 (the level of the Lower Earnings Limit in 2026/27) and £242, you are treated as paying NI contributions and qualifying years count towards State Pension and other contributory benefits. When this factsheet refers to people who have '*paid*' NI contributions, this includes people with earnings between £129 and £242 a week who are treated as having paid NI contributions.

Employees pay Class 1 NI contributions as a percentage of earnings, and these are collected with Income Tax. Employers also pay NI contributions. If you have insufficient NI contributions for full State Pension but have not reached State Pension Age, you may be able to increase your State Pension by working and paying more NI contributions.

Contracting out

A deduction is made from your State Pension if you were in a '*contracted out*' personal or workplace pension scheme. You are more likely to have contracted out if you worked in the public sector e.g. NHS, local council, civil service, fire service, teaching, police or armed forces. But it was also possible to contract out with a private or personal pension scheme.

This means you paid lower rate NI contributions into a contracted-out pension, or some NI contributions were paid into your private pension rather than going towards Additional State Pension. It was not possible to contract out of the basic State Pension. You could only contract out of Additional State Pension if you earned more than the Lower Earnings Limit and paid standard-rate Class 1 NI contributions.

Check if you were contracted out by looking at old payslips. If the NI contributions line has the letter D, E, L N or O next to it, you were contracted out. You were not contracted out if it has a letter A. If you are unsure, check with your employer or pension provider.

Note

Contracting out was abolished from 6 April 2016 and everyone now automatically pays standard National Insurance.

Self-employed

You no longer need to pay Class 2 contributions when self-employed. If your relevant profits are at or above the small profits limit, you continue to have access to State Pension without paying Class 2 contributions. If your relevant profits are below the small profits limit, you can still choose to make voluntary Class 2 contributions to build up your contributions record or fill any gaps, see section 12.4.

Working abroad

NI contributions paid abroad may help you qualify for State Pension if you worked in an EEA country, or one with a reciprocal agreement with the UK.

12.3 NI credits

If you are under State Pension age, you can be entitled to a credit in place of a NI contribution, if you:

- receive or received Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance
- receive or received Income Support (IS) as a carer, CA or CSP, or would receive CA/CSP if not for overlapping benefit rules
- do or did not get CA, CSP or IS but provide care for at least 20 hours a week for one or more people getting AA, PIP/ADP daily living component, DLA/CDP middle or high rate care component, Scottish Adult DLA, PADP, Constant Attendance Allowance (CAA), or whose need for care has been certified by a health or social care professional ('Carer's Credits')
- receive Child Benefit for a child aged under 12
- are a grandparent or other adult family member providing childcare for a child aged under 12 or you are an approved foster carer
- are married to, or in a civil partnership with, a member of the armed forces and you accompanied them on a posting outside the UK. This is available to women born on or after 6 April 1953 or men born on or after 6 April 1951 for tax years from 1975/76. The credits are available to widows, widowers, divorcees and former civil partners provided they were married or in a civil partnership with the member of the armed forces at the time of the accompanied posting.

You need to apply to get Carer's Credits, credits as a foster parent or grandparent. Except for grandparent's credits, you should apply before the end of the tax year following the one in which you are entitled to them. Late applications may be accepted if there is a good reason for not applying earlier.

You must apply for Grandparent's credits after the end of the tax year following the one in which you were entitled. You need to apply for credits for military spouses and civil partners but there are no time limits. Different credits and paid contributions can be combined to make a full qualifying year. See www.gov.uk/national-insurance-credits for more.

Action

Apply for Carer's Credits using form CC1 which you can get online from www.gov.uk/government/publications/carers-credit-application-form. Use form CF411A from HMRC for foster parent credits.

Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP)

From 1978 to April 2010, HRP protected the NI contribution record of people caring for a child or a sick or disabled person. You were entitled to HRP if you met any of the following conditions, or in some situations a combination of them, for a whole tax year between April 1978 and 2010:

- received Child Benefit for a child under 16 years of age
- received Income Support and did not need to register for work because you cared for a sick or disabled person
- regularly spent at least 35 hours a week caring for someone getting AA, CAA, or DLA middle or high-rate care component. You must have been caring for 48 weeks in any tax year, rising to 52 weeks after 6 April 1994
- you were a registered foster parent.

If you got Carer's Allowance, you received NI credits so do not need HRP. You get HRP if you qualify and have not paid or been credited with enough NI contributions for the tax year to count as a qualifying year.

HRP should be given automatically if you qualified because you were getting Child Benefit or Income Support as a carer. Some people entitled to Child Benefit between 1978 and May 2000 may have missed out on HRP and, if this applies, you can make a claim now, see below.

You must apply for HRP if you qualified because you cared for a disabled person, were a foster parent, or qualified under one condition for part of a tax year and under another for the rest of the year.

Apply for HRP on form CF411 from your local Jobcentre Plus, by phoning HMRC, or downloading from www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-insurance-application-form-for-home-responsibilities-protection-cf411

12.4 Voluntary NI contributions

If you are not paying NI contributions and are not entitled to credits or HRP, you can pay Class 2 or 3 voluntary contributions to protect your State Pension. You cannot pay voluntary contributions for any year in which you were only liable to pay reduced rate married woman's contributions.

There are time limits for paying voluntary contributions. They must normally be paid by the end of the sixth tax year after the one in which they were due. For example, you have until 5 April 2027 to make up for gaps in your record for the period since the tax year of 2020/21.

If you were self-employed but earning below a certain amount, payment of Class 2 NI contributions is voluntary. You can choose to pay these retrospectively (within the same time limits as Class 3 above). If you would be eligible to pay Class 2 contributions, these are cheaper than Class 3 and if you are paying these in working age, Class 2 also count towards claims for other contributory benefits.

Sometimes, a small amount of Class 2 or 3 payments can make a big difference. For example, a few extra weeks NICs may enable a whole year to count or may take you above the minimum threshold to get any State Pension. However, at other times, it may make very little difference to your State Pension entitlement so seek advice.

Action

If your NI contributions are not enough for a full State Pension, decide whether to make additional voluntary contributions by weighing up their cost against the potential gains in entitlement.

There may be potential losses in means-tested benefits like Pension Credit to consider.

Useful organisations

Citizens Advice

In **England**, go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Telephone 0800 144 8848

In **Wales**, go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales

Telephone 0800 702 2020

In **Scotland**, go to www.cas.org.uk

Telephone 0800 028 1456

National network of advice centres offering free, confidential, independent advice, face to face or by telephone.

Disability Service Centre

www.gov.uk/disability-service-centre

Provides advice or information about claims for Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance.

- **Attendance Allowance (AA)**
Telephone 0800 731 0122
- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)**
If you were born on or before 8 April 1948
Telephone 0800 731 0122
If you were born after 8 April 1948
Telephone 0800 121 4600
- **Personal Independence Payment helpline**
Telephone 0800 121 4433

Future Pension Centre

www.gov.uk/future-pension-centre

Telephone 0800 731 0175

Gov.uk

www.gov.uk

Official government website with information about pensions planning, State Pension, and workplace, personal and stakeholder pensions.

HM Revenue and Customs

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs

Contact HMRC for more information about taxes and National Insurance contributions. The National Insurance contributions office is listed below.

International Pension Centre

www.gov.uk/international-pension-centre

Telephone +44 (0) 191 218 7777

MoneyHelper

www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/pensions-and-retirement

0800 011 3797

Offers information and guidance on different types of pensions. They can help you if you want to complain about a workplace or private pension.

National Insurance Contributions Office

www.gov.uk/national-insurance

Telephone 0300 200 3500

Pensions Ombudsman

www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone 0800 917 4487

Free, statutory service investigating complaints about how pension schemes are run.

Pension Service (The)

www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service

Telephone 0800 731 0469

State Pension claim line 0800 731 7898

Future Pension Centre 0800 731 0175

Details of State Pensions including forecasts and how to claim.

Pension Tracing Service

www.gov.uk/find-lost-pension

Telephone 0800 731 0193

Free DWP service that can help to trace an old pension scheme if the details are unclear or have been lost.

Age UK

Age UK provides advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online. Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

Age UK Advice

www.ageuk.org.uk

0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8.00am to 7.00pm

In Wales contact

Age Cymru Advice

www.agecymru.wales

0300 303 4498

In Northern Ireland contact

Age NI

www.ageni.org

0808 808 7575

In Scotland contact

Age Scotland

www.agescotland.org.uk

0800 124 4222

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