



Changing Populations

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Activities snapshot



Upcoming events

26-29 August - **Nissa Finney and Alice Butler present at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference**¹

2-4 September - **British Society for Population Studies Annual Conference**²

3-5 September - **Katherine Keenan, Kuoshi Hu and Vincent Ramos present at the European Consortium for Sociological Research Annual Conference**³

11-12 September - **Shunqi Zhang presents at the 1st International Conference of the Sustainable Ageing EAPS Working Group**⁴

22-24 September - **Melinda Mills is a keynote speaker at the 10th Evolutionary Demography Conference**⁵

25 September - **CPC-CG webinar with James Robards from the Office for National Statistics**⁶

29-30 September - **Melinda Mills is a keynote speaker at City+2025@Oxford: The 8th International Conference on Interdisciplinary Urban Studies**⁷

¹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/920/RBS_IBG_Annual_Conference

²https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/917/British_Society_of_Population_Studies_Annual_Conference_2025

³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/921/ECSR_Conference_2025

⁴http://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/948/1st_International_Conference_of_the_Sustainable_Ageing_EAPS_Working_Group

⁵<https://evodemo2025.weebly.com/programme.html>

⁶https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/941/CPC_CG_Webinar_Dr_James_Robards

⁷<https://www.city-plus.org/city2025oxford-urban-data-analytics-and-the-polycrisis-call-for-abstracts/>

19-21 November - **Jakub Bijak is a keynote speaker at the Wittgenstein Centre Conference 2025**⁸

15-16 December - Athina Vlachantoni is a keynote speaker at the QAR-Net Care second workshop⁹

For the latest updates, please see our online events calendar¹⁰.

Opportunities

Post-doctoral Research Fellow¹¹ in social inequalities in the risk and aftermath of miscarriage. Based at the University of St Andrews. Closing date: 29 August

Rising demand for public health funerals



⁸<https://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/news-events/calendar/conferences/demographic-perspectives-on-migration-in-the-21st-century>

⁹<https://centreforcure.ac.uk/qar-net-care/2025/06/qar-net-care-second-workshop-call-for-papers/>

¹⁰http://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/

¹¹<https://www.vacancies.st-andrews.ac.uk/Vacancies/1/6290/0/455403/889/post-doctoral-research-fellow-ar3162>

New research by CPC-CG members Dr Stephanie Thiehoff, Teresa McGowan and Professor Jane Falkingham CBE has found that tackling deprivation among older populations could reduce the need for funerals provided by the public purse.

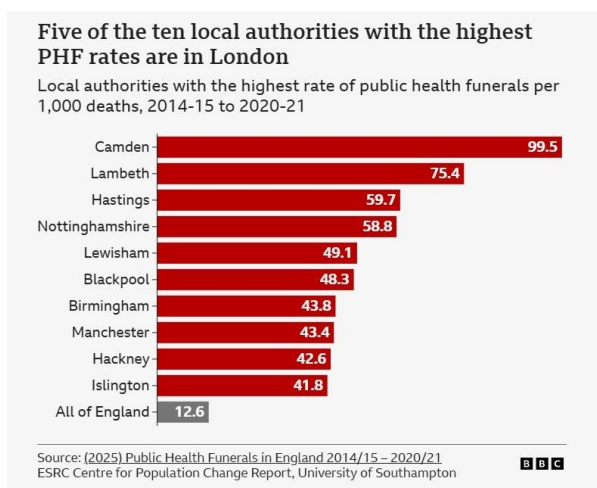
In collaboration with the BBC¹², using freedom of information requests from both Councils and NHS Trusts, the study¹³ found that publicly funded funerals are more common for men over the age of 60 compared to females and those who are younger when they die.

The findings show that the total number of public health funerals (PHFs) rose sharply from 4,760 in the financial year 2014/15 to 7,020 in 2020/21. A recent snapshot survey by the Local Government Association (LGA)¹⁴ also found that demand was rising for PHFs, with a 13% increase since 2021/22.

However, the CPC-CG team believe that previous figures have omitted to take into account public health funerals organised by NHS Trusts. They found that almost a quarter of all public health funerals reported were carried out by NHS Trusts (an average of 1,379 a year).

While the total number of public health funerals is significant, each marking a death and a public cost, the CPC-CG study found that although absolute numbers rose, the rate per 1,000 deaths did not increase, apart from in London. The finding highlights the importance of considering population size and characteristics.

They found that areas with higher population density, greater homelessness, and more overcrowding, such as London, Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham, and Bristol, have higher public health funeral rates. Many coastal areas, such as Blackpool, Hastings, and Hartlepool, also have high rates. In addition to having older age structures, coastal regions have been found to have higher levels of deprivation, which is associated with the demand and provision of public health funerals.



¹²<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yrnjpgm0mo>

¹³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025_Public_Health_Funerals_in_England_201415-202021.pdf

¹⁴<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/more-12-public-health-funerals-taking-place-day-lga-survey>

The Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI) 2019 was identified as a key predictor of these rates, particularly in London and the South East. The research found that a one-unit increase in IDAOPI 2019 was associated with an additional 56 public health funerals per 1,000 deaths each year, illustrating the direct impact of economic inequality on funeral provision.

Rising poverty due to the ongoing cost of living crisis may further strain families' abilities to cover funeral costs, increasing the demand for public health funerals. According to the LGA, half of councils surveyed in 2024¹⁵ reported that the financial pressures from the cost of living have had a significant impact on public health funerals.

The seminal work by the LGA estimated a total spend of over £21 million on public health funerals by Councils between 2019/2020 and 2022/2023. While the CPC-CG study can only make a cautious estimate of the cost to NHS Trusts, their finding that Trusts in England are spending around £1.36 million a year on this provision has previously been unmeasured.

Teresa McGowan¹⁶, co-author of the study, comments:

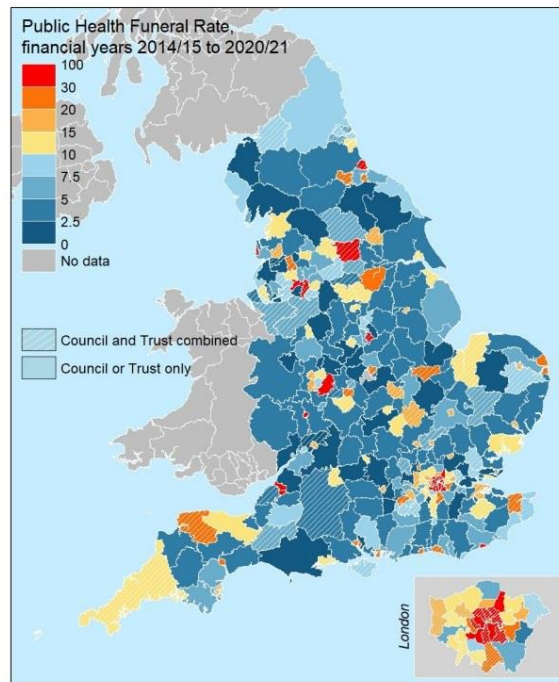
"Public health funerals are provided for individuals who cannot afford their own funeral, either through their own estate or with support from relatives, so requiring a public health funeral can signify the culmination of various disadvantages. This is evidenced by the finding that the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index is a key predictor.

"For local authorities and NHS Trusts managing such funerals, the findings suggest that strategic investment in reducing deprivation and addressing the socio-economic factors leading to public health funerals, particularly among older populations, could lessen both the human and financial costs associated with this issue."

"Further research is needed to project future demand for public health funerals, especially in light of increasing deprivation and kinlessness. Our study is the first to map rates for England. Systematic data collection could help provide a clearer understanding of the individuals who require these services. With Councils and the NHS increasingly under pressure, better coordination of national reporting would ensure that resources are allocated effectively, particularly in areas where demand is expected to rise."

¹⁵<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/public-health-funerals-2024-research-report>

¹⁶<https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about-us/the-team/622/Teresa-McGowan>



1 - Distribution of public health funerals by Local Authority District, England, 2014/15 to 2020/21.

The full findings are published in the CPC-CG Report: Public health funerals in England 2014/15 - 2020/21¹⁷.

You can also explore interactive charts by area in the BBC News report: Are taxpayers funding a cost of dying crisis?¹⁸ and watch the BBC South Today¹⁹ special feature on the study, featuring interviews with Professor Falkingham.



<https://youtu.be/5Elxs5BJKpQ>

2 - Professor Jane Falkingham speaks about Public Health Funerals research on BBC South Today Evening News²⁰

¹⁷[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025 Public Health Funerals in England 201415-202021.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025%20Public%20Health%20Funerals%20in%20England%20201415-202021.pdf)

¹⁸<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yrnjpgm0mo>

¹⁹<https://youtu.be/5Elxs5BJKpQ?si=FHnZiAkGj7Ls6-c9>

²⁰<https://youtu.be/5Elxs5BJKpQ?si=jkrLBZFOfwExm6Je>

Further reading

Public health funerals in England 2014/15 - 2020/21²¹ (CPC-CG Report)

Are taxpayers funding a cost of dying crisis?²² (BBC News)

"I clean up the aftermath of traumatic deaths"²³ (BBC News)

"The delivery man arrived with the ashes in a gift bag" – why are so many people opting out of traditional funerals?²⁴ (The Guardian)

More than 12 public health funerals taking place a day – LGA survey²⁵ (Local Government Association)

Working from home isn't significantly changing where people live



²¹[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025 Public Health Funerals in England 201415-202021.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025%20Public%20Health%20Funerals%20in%20England%20201415-202021.pdf)

²²<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yrnjpgm0mq>

²³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/news/latest_news/?action=story&id=843

²⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/jul/23/the-delivery-man-arrived-with-the-ashes-in-a-gift-bag-why-are-so-many-people-opting-out-of-traditional-funerals>

²⁵<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/more-12-public-health-funerals-taking-place-day-lga-survey>

Hopes that working from home would help struggling UK regions attract high-skilled workers are not being realised, according to the findings of a study led by CPC-CG members Professor Jackie Wahba OBE and Dr David McCollum.

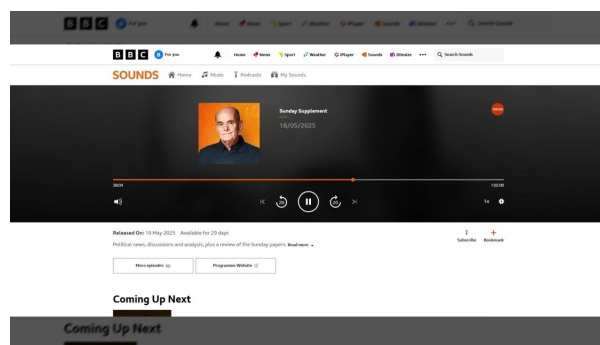
Working from home has surged since the Covid-19 pandemic, especially among older, high-skilled professionals in and around London and other major cities. However, a report and series of policy briefings by a team of researchers reveal this hasn't significantly changed where people live, or helped spread talent more evenly across the country.

Led by Professor Wahba of the University of Southampton and Dr McCollum of the University of St Andrews, the project was conducted in collaboration with colleagues from the University of Birmingham, De Montfort University, and University of the Arts London. The researchers found most home workers still follow hybrid patterns, splitting time between home and office and staying within reach of major employment hubs. This limits the potential to reduce regional inequality or boost growth outside South-East England.

The team's findings show that among all workers in the UK just over 52% never work from home, but among high-skilled workers, this figure is just 29%. The majority of those who work from home do so in a hybrid pattern, with at least some days spent in the office.

They also found that when high-skilled workers change where they live, housing needs tend to be the driver, rather than jobs. This suggests the idea that working from home will allow lagging regions to attract high earners has yet to materialise, and in fact may not be realised at all.

The research project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, warns that without stronger policy action, working from home may even deepen regional divides.



<https://youtu.be/oILDmtsQ0CI>

3 - Dr David McCollum on BBC Radio Wales Sunday Supplement²⁶

²⁶<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FoILDmtsQ0CI&data=05%202|cpc%40soton.ac.uk|a8b8ce6b8f19462ac84908dd96aa66fa|4a5378f929f44d3ebe89669d03ada9d8|0|0|638832380814451850|Unknown|TWfPbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIslAiOiJXaW4zMilslkF0ljoiTWFpbCIsIlldUjovfQ%3D%3D|0||&sdata=eO2zIXHippdoSjv9sBUyfiEcxD4HCcoA9qNKCSGZd%2BU%3D&reserved=0>

The researchers analysed data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study and Labour Force Survey. Researchers also undertook interviews with stakeholders from local and regional government, businesses, and universities in Glasgow, Sheffield and Birmingham, three second-tier regional cities with distinct economic profiles and changing patterns of high-skilled employment. Interviewees noted some advantages of working from home, such as wider recruitment opportunities, more efficient use of office space, and the ability to attract workers to their regions due to lower living costs. However, they raised concerns about quieter city centres, weaker workplace culture, and the limited ability to work from home in many sectors.

There was broad agreement that local challenges like low skills, economic inactivity, skills shortages, and poor job quality cannot be solved by attracting high-skilled workers alone. Interviewees stressed that local economies benefit most when high-skilled workers both live and work in the area. This underlines the importance of promoting and improving local assets and amenities to attract and retain talent.

Findings also highlight serious data gaps in understanding how working from home affects where people live and work – calling for more detailed national survey questions and local data, and further research on employer perspectives across sectors.

Professor Wahba said:

“Working from home is now a normal part of working life, with the potential to change where and how people work. It could offer major benefits, giving both employers and workers more choice and flexibility. But to achieve this, we must tackle key obstacles to residential mobility.”

“It was widely believed that working from home would let high-skilled workers move further from their employers, opening up opportunities for less wealthy areas. But so far, it remains most common among higher earners in a few sectors, mostly near London and other major cities.”

She continued: “There is also little evidence on the net economic impact for local areas of these changes in working patterns. We need better data on who is working from home, how often, and in what roles. This will help policymakers give targeted support to more regions. Investing in transport links, fast broadband, schools, healthcare, green spaces, cultural venues, and affordable housing are as important as providing flexible work options in drawing and retaining skilled workers.

“Working from home isn’t yet bridging the gap between regions. Policymakers, businesses, and local leaders need to act to ensure that job flexibility does not exacerbate inequality but is harnessed to support real, long-term regional growth.”

Further reading

Working from home: Impacts on residential mobility and spatial inequality²⁷ (CPC-CG Report)

Regional differentials, changing working patterns and high-skilled labour mobility: An overview²⁸ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 83)

Working from home: Implications for residential mobility and spatial inequalities²⁹ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 84)

Working from home: Is it changing where we live?³⁰ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 85)

Working from home and regional development: Case studies from UK cities³¹ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 86)

Working from home and regional disparities: Insights for UK policy³² (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 87)

Post-Covid home working has failed to level up UK economy, study finds³³ (The Guardian)

How the rise in remote working could have a negative impact on UK growth³⁴ (The Independent)

Working from home 'has not boosted towns outside London'³⁵ (The Telegraph)

Post-pandemic geographies of working from home: more of the same for spatial inequalities?³⁶ (Geography Directions)

²⁷[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025 Working from home Impacts on residential mobility and spatial inequality.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025%20Working%20from%20home%20Impacts%20on%20residential%20mobility%20and%20spatial%20inequality.pdf)

²⁸[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB83 Regional differentials, changing working patterns and high-skilled labour mobility.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB83%20Regional%20differentials,%20changing%20working%20patterns%20and%20high-skilled%20labour%20mobility.pdf)

²⁹[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB84 Working from home Implications for residential mobility and spatial inequalities.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB84%20Working%20from%20home%20Implications%20for%20residential%20mobility%20and%20spatial%20inequalities.pdf)

³⁰[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB84 Working from home Implications for residential mobility and spatial inequalities.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB84%20Working%20from%20home%20Implications%20for%20residential%20mobility%20and%20spatial%20inequalities.pdf)

³¹[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB86 Working from home and regional development Case studies from UK cities.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB86%20Working%20from%20home%20and%20regional%20development%20Case%20studies%20from%20UK%20cities.pdf)

³²[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB87 Working from home and regional disparities Insights for UK policy.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB87%20Working%20from%20home%20and%20regional%20disparities%20Insights%20for%20UK%20policy.pdf)

³³https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/15/covid-pandemic-home-working-careers-uk-economy?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

³⁴<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/remote-working-from-home-impacts-covid-b2751372.html>

³⁵<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/05/15/working-from-home-not-boosted-towns-outside-london-esrc-uk/>

³⁶<https://blog.geographydirections.com/2025/03/26/post-pandemic-geographies-of-working-from-home-more-of-the-same-for-spatial-inequalities/>

Post-Covid home working has failed to level up UK economy, study finds

Prevalence of hybrid over fully remote roles dashes hopes of greater geographical spread of talent



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The rise in remote working could have a negative impact on UK growth. Here's how

Covid-19 pandemic forced a change in how companies approach working from home

Ben Mitchell • Thursday 15 May 2025 15:19 BST • [Comments](#)



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INEQUALITY ORIGINAL CONTENT

Post-pandemic geographies of working from home: more of the same for spatial inequalities?

March 26, 2025

[1 Comment](#)

By [Dr David McCollum](#), University of St Andrews

Royal
Geographical
Society
with IBG

Concerns many young people unable to form the families they would like



This year's World Population Day theme brings attention to worldwide declining fertility rates. While public discourse often centres on fears of population collapse, the primary concern is that many young people are unable to form the families they would like.

Observed each year on 11 July, World Population Day in 2025 focused on the theme 'Empowering young people to create the families they want in a fair and hopeful world'³⁷.

The recent United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)'s State of World Population report³⁸ highlights a widespread lack of reproductive agency, particularly among young people, many of whom cannot have the children they want. This year's World Population Day called attention to this issue, focusing on the largest-ever generation of young people and the importance of ensuring they have the rights and resources to shape their futures.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres³⁹ urged: "Let us stand with young people and build a future where every person can shape their destiny in a world that is fair, peaceful and full of hope."

³⁷<https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-population-day>

³⁸<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/swp25-layout-en-v250609-web.pdf#page=56>

³⁹<https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-population-day>

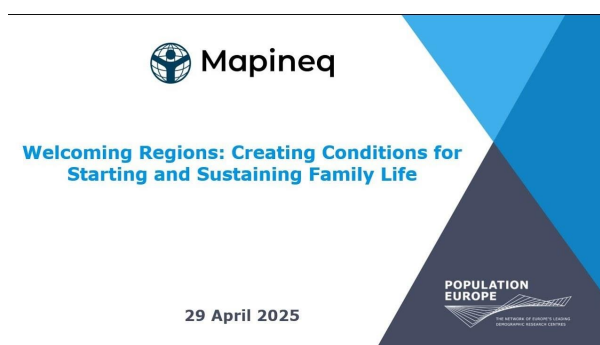
Professor Jane Falkingham CBE⁴⁰, Director of the ESRC Centre for Population Change and Connecting Generations (CPC-CG), notes:

"Fertility decline is not simply a matter of choice. It reflects economic uncertainty, unaffordable childcare, precarious housing, and a mismatch between fertility intentions and the means to realise them."

CPC-CG researchers have been studying fertility and family formation trends⁴¹ since the Centre's inception in 2009. The latest findings reveal that while the UK's total fertility rate (TFR) is falling, the desire to have children has remained relatively stable. In the UK, the two-child norm persists, yet young adults are delaying or foregoing parenthood due to economic insecurity and pessimism about the future. Nearly half of UK adults aged 18–29 report being uncertain or unlikely to have children. Fertility intentions are closely linked to income and perceived life stability, both of which vary significantly by region.

Speaking to the Financial Times⁴², Professor Ann Berrington⁴³, CPC-CG fertility and family research lead, explained: "Whilst some individuals desire to remain child-free, the empirical evidence suggests that there are a significant number who want children, but are currently unable to have them."

In an interview for the Telegraph⁴⁴, Professor Melinda Mills MBE⁴⁵, CG Co-Director, highlighted the impact of inflexible employers, economic precarity, and high housing costs on declining EU birth rates. She pointed out that increased female labour market participation often clashes with the demands of unpaid childcare. Delaying parenthood into the 30s also reduces opportunities to meet one's desired family size.



<https://youtu.be/22uXlv1Qpfc>

⁴⁰https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/14/Jane_Falkingham

⁴¹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/research_programme/fertility_and_family/#Current

⁴²<https://www.ft.com/content/1559b9df-0f76-4c50-baa4-32242d2fdea0>

⁴³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/4/Ann_Berrington

⁴⁴<http://telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/12/03/eu-birth-rate-suffers-record-slump-pressure-bloc-finances/>

⁴⁵https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/1797/Melinda_Mills

Fertility and family formation: Latest research findings

Research⁴⁶ by CPC-CG Co-Director Professor Hill Kulu⁴⁷, with Dr Bernice Kuang⁴⁸, Professor Ann Berrington⁴⁹ and Dr Sarah Christison⁵⁰, used census-linked administrative data to examine childbearing patterns in Great Britain from the 1990s to today.

“We wanted to understand not just whether people are having fewer children, but when they're having them and how family formation differs across our nations,” said Professor Kulu.

Their study found first-birth rates declined during the 1990s, recovered slightly in the early 2000s, then declined again. The main change was timing, with people starting childbearing later, not overall family size. Once families had a first child, the timing between subsequent births stayed consistent. However, second- and third-birth rates fell in the late 1990s and stabilised in the early 2000s. In Scotland, second and third births were less common than in England and Wales. The study found little impact from changes in education or ethnicity, although there were sharp drops in first births among women with lower educational attainment.

To understand these changing family formation intentions, CPC researchers are also running the ESRC-funded UK Generations and Gender Survey (GGS)⁵¹, led by Professors Brienna Perelli-Harris⁵² and Ann Berrington, with Dr Olga Maslovskaya⁵³ and Dr Bernice Kuang at the University of Southampton. The first round of UK GGS survey responses revealed an increasing number of young adults intending not to have children at all⁵⁴. The data show that 15% of the Gen Z (18–24-year-olds) survey respondents definitely do not intend to have children. Among childless older millennials (36–41), one-third say they definitely won't have children. Environmental concerns play a role for older millennials, but for Gen Z, it's more complex: those more likely to want children are also more concerned about climate change.

Professor Perelli-Harris said:

“Whilst we found that environmental concerns are a factor for older millennials intending to remain childless, our study suggests this isn't the case for Gen Z. This may be because

⁴⁶<https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2025.2491354>

⁴⁷https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/691/Hill_Kulu

⁴⁸https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/66/Bernice_Kuang

⁴⁹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/4/Ann_Berrington

⁵⁰https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/1590/Sarah_Christison

⁵¹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/research_programme/generations_and_gender_survey/#Current

⁵²https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/39/Brienna_Perelli_Harris

⁵³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/473/Olga_Maslovskaya

⁵⁴https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB72_Intending_to_remain_childless_are_concerns_about_climate_change_and_overpopulation_the_cause.pdf

some younger people do not intend to have children for other reasons, or it could be that Gen Zers who would like to have children are more worried about the planet that their children will inherit.”

If people do decide to have children, childcare access and costs are also major considerations⁵⁵. Families in the lowest income brackets spend up to 30% of their income on childcare, compared to 10% for higher earners. The average spend is £560 per month, with one in four paying over £800. Lower-income families are also less likely to use childcare, showing clear affordability and access issues. “Our findings suggest a lack of affordability may be stopping low-income families from using childcare services, and at the same time preventing parents from working more hours,” said Dr Kuang.

Childcare also remains strongly gendered. GGS data show⁵⁶ that while flexible working helps some fathers share care duties, it has little effect for mothers, who often take on more responsibility despite also working. “Fathers contribute to childcare,” said Dr Kuang, “but mothers, even those who work outside the home, are much more likely to handle the difficult jobs that get in the way of the working day.”

In a Financial Times⁵⁷ article, Professor Berrington linked childbearing hesitation to such broader concerns: “You might have a job, but if you’re worried about losing it, or worried about inflation or worried about conflict in Ukraine, then you still might hesitate to have children.”

Professor Berrington has also been working with Dr Lydia Palumbo⁵⁸ and Professor Peter Eibich⁵⁹ to explore how economic insecurity affects relationship outcomes⁶⁰. Highlighting the importance of family policies that reflect economic realities and provide support for couples in unstable situations, their research has found that financial stability predicts relationship progression. Employed cohabiting couples who are saving are more likely to marry, while those facing financial hardship are more likely to separate or remain in limbo. Female breadwinner couples are especially vulnerable to separation.

Housing is another key factor shaping young people’s life choices. Research by Louis MacPherson⁶¹ and Dr Francesca Fiori⁶² finds more young people in Scotland now rely on the private rental sector⁶³ due to limited access to social housing or homeownership. Austerity, the global financial crisis, and stricter social housing criteria have left many young people

⁵⁵https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB73_Who_uses_childcare_in_the_UK_and_how_much_does_it_cost.pdf

⁵⁶<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jomf.13112?af=R>

⁵⁷<https://www.ft.com/content/1b139d1a-07ea-4612-9c2b-62c430119613>

⁵⁸https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/1419/Lydia_Palumbo

⁵⁹<https://dauphine.psl.eu/en/research/resume-database/profile/eibich-peter>

⁶⁰https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB81_Living_in_precarious_partnerships.pdf

⁶¹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/2371/Louis_MacPherson

⁶²https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/19/Francesca_Fiori

⁶³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025_PB88_Scotlands_generation_rent.pdf

choosing between remaining in the parental home or renting privately. The latter is associated with greater instability and delayed family formation.

Louis MacPherson comments:

“The study highlights the need for more affordable housing and tighter private rental sector regulation, aligning with the Scottish Government’s ‘Housing to 2040’ and ‘Population Strategy’, which recognise the role of safe, good quality, and affordable housing to support young people’s residential independence and family formation.”

CG member Molly Broome⁶⁴, an economist at the Resolution Foundation, published a report that found that, despite modest gains in homeownership rates among younger millennials, young people today remain significantly less likely to own homes compared to previous generations, with ownership rates for 25–34-year-olds falling from a peak of 55% in 1990 to just 31% in 2022-23.

Speaking on the findings of the Housing Hurdles report⁶⁵, she said: “After decades of falling youth home ownership, Britain has finally turned a corner with the share of young homeowners growing consistently since the mid-2010s. However, poorer young people have largely missed out on this recovery, and the property divide among young millennials has widened as a result. Housing costs have also been falling recently, but the scale of the crisis means that housing stress remains rampant among young people – particularly among poorer families, Londoners and private renters. There is still a long way to go before Britain can claim to have tackled its housing crisis, and the Government must ensure that people aren’t left behind in efforts to improve the outlook for young people.”

The UN World Population Day theme helps to raise awareness of the policy-relevant work the CPC-CG team have been undertaking. Indeed, the UNFPA’s State of World Population report⁶⁶ references CPC research on intergenerational co-residence and transitions to parenthood, and Professor Falkingham recently contributed to a UK Parliament POSTnote on declining birthrates⁶⁷.

Professor Falkingham concludes: “Together, these CPC-CG studies offer a detailed picture of how economic, social and policy factors interact to shape family life in the UK and beyond. As the UN’s 2025 State of World Population report argues, empowering young people is not only about services. It is about providing a sense of hope, security, and fairness.

⁶⁴https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/1808/Molly_Broome

⁶⁵<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/housing-hurdles/>

⁶⁶<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/swp25-layout-en-v250609-web.pdf#page=56>

⁶⁷https://www.cpc.ac.uk/news/latest_news/?action=story&id=835

"If young adults are to have the families they desire, we must listen to them and address the barriers they face. CPC and CG research continues to provide the data and insight needed to shape those solutions."

Further reading

Scotland's 'generation rent'⁶⁸ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 88)

Living in precarious partnerships⁶⁹ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 81)

Who uses childcare in the UK and how much does it cost?⁷⁰ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 73)

Intending to remain childless: Are concerns about climate change and overpopulation the cause?⁷¹ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 72)

How do parents share childcare that interferes with paid work? Work arrangements, flexible working, and childcare⁷² (Journal of Marriage and Family)

Understanding fertility trends in Britain: Do fertility intentions differ across England, Wales and Scotland?⁷³ (CPC-CG Working Paper 105)

Long-term fertility trends by birth order in Britain: Comparison between England & Wales and Scotland⁷⁴ (Population Studies)

Living in precarious partnerships: Understanding how young men's and women's economic precariousness contribute to outcomes of first cohabitation⁷⁵ (Population Studies)

Housing Hurdles report⁷⁶ (Resolution Foundation)

The Real Fertility Crisis⁷⁷ (UNFPA State of World Population 2025 report)

Impacts of birthrate decline⁷⁸ (POSTnote Research Briefing)

What makes a city attractive? Insights from the Mapineq Attractive Cities Survey⁷⁹ (Mapineq Report)

⁶⁸https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/2025_PB88_Scotlands_generation_rent.pdf

⁶⁹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB81_Living_in_precarious_partnerships.pdf

⁷⁰https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB73_Who_uses_childcare_in_the_UK_and_how_much_does_it_cost.pdf

⁷¹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB72_Intending_to_remain_childless_are_concerns_about_climate_change_and_overpopulation_the_cause.pdf

⁷²<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jomf.13112>

⁷³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/WP_105_Berrington_et_al.pdf

⁷⁴<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00324728.2025.2491354?src=exp-la#d1e133>

⁷⁵<https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2024.2438692>

⁷⁶<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/housing-hurdles/>

⁷⁷<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/swp25-layout-en-v250609-web.pdf>

⁷⁸<https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0745/>

⁷⁹<https://mapineq.eu/what-makes-a-city-attractive-insights-from-the-mapineq-attractive-cities-survey/>

One in five people do not expect to have as many children as they want⁸⁰ (Financial Times)

Flexible hours 'trap' mothers into doing more parenting⁸¹ (The Times)

How parenthood became a luxury few can afford⁸² (The Telegraph)

Babies or house: how would you rather spend half a million pounds?⁸³ (The Times)

Britain's shrinking families: An economic 'timebomb'⁸⁴ (Sky News)

The mother of all problems: Why isn't London having babies anymore?⁸⁵ (The Standard)

Population change in the UK and lessons for Labour's five missions⁸⁶ (CPC-CG Factsheet)

The changing inter-relationship between partnership dynamics and fertility trends in Europe and the United States: A review⁸⁷ (Demographic Research)

Genetics and reproductive behaviour: A review⁸⁸ (Human Evolutionary Demography)

Find out more about our Fertility and family research projects⁸⁹.

⁸⁰<https://www.ft.com/content/1559b9df-0f76-4c50-baa4-32242d2fdea0>

⁸¹<https://www.thetimes.com/life-style/parenting/article/flexible-hours-trap-mothers-into-doing-more-parenting-gmp095wd2>

⁸²<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/04/05/baby-desert-britain-stopped-having-children/>

⁸³<https://www.thetimes.com/life-style/parenting/article/children-vs-house-cost-500000-pounds-3lfznlkx0>

⁸⁴<https://news.sky.com/story/britains-shrinking-families-an-economic-timebomb-13316294>

⁸⁵<https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/babies-birth-rate-costs-childless-women-london-b1210884.html>

⁸⁶[http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/Population change in the UK and lessons for Labours five missions.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/Population%20change%20in%20the%20UK%20and%20lessons%20for%20Labours%20five%20missions.pdf)

⁸⁷<https://www.demographic-research.org/articles/volume/52/7/>

⁸⁸<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0251/chapters/10.11647/obp.0251.13>

⁸⁹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/research_programme/fertility_and_family/#Current



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Demographics and population [+ Add to myFT](#)

One in five people do not expect to have as many children as they want

UN study suggests economic strains, including job insecurity, among the biggest barriers to parenthood



The OECD has warned the global decline in fertility poses a threat to future prosperity, as it increases fiscal pressures because of ageing populations © Dreamstime

 state of world population 2025

THE REAL FERTILITY CRISIS

The pursuit of
reproductive agency
in a changing world

Impacts of birthrate decline





[Highlighting place-based demographic challenges on BBC Politics South](#)

Professor Falkingham⁹⁰ also appeared on BBC Politics South⁹¹ to discuss regional and national demographic challenges.

She explained that the Isle of Wight already has an ageing population, with many young people leaving and not returning. In 2024, just 1,100 babies were born on the island, compared to 3,000 in nearby Southampton. Nationally, birth rates have dropped to a record low of 1.44, with the decline visible across all regions.

Professor Falkingham highlighted that population ageing is driven more by falling birth rates than increased longevity. While longer lives are to be welcomed, the shrinking base of the population has serious implications for schools, social care, pensions, and the economy.

⁹⁰https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/14/Jane_Falkingham

⁹¹<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m000dk0w/politics-south>

She noted that delays in family formation are linked to affordability issues, particularly housing. Many people are having fewer children than they would like. She also identified rising costs of living and limited access to services such as IVF as contributing factors.

The result is a new “double sandwich generation⁹²” – individuals simultaneously supporting elderly parents and helping their adult children with childcare, enabling their participation in the workforce.

The panel's discussions explored ideas around policies that enable people to have the families they want and support younger generations struggling with housing and financial insecurity.

Watch the interview recording:



<https://youtu.be/luEdSirVug>

Gresham College lecture on generational wealth gap

Meanwhile, Connecting Generations Co-Director Dr Mike Brewer⁹³ gave a lecture at Gresham College exploring economic trends to reveal how they have created tensions between generations by exacerbating disparities in their respective living standards.

Dr Brewer, who is also Chief Economist and Deputy Chief Executive of the Resolution Foundation, discussed how, while income inequality in the UK has remained stable since the 1990s, the real issue lies in wealth inequality, which has grown due to a sharp rise in household wealth, especially in property and pensions.

This has led to stark generational divides, with Baby Boomers accumulating far more wealth than younger cohorts, who also face stagnant wages and high housing costs. Recent economic shocks due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have exposed these disparities further.

Although there are early signs that younger generations might begin to catch up due to falling asset prices and rising interest rates, the gap remains wide. Dr Brewer stressed that

⁹²https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB79_Lone_parents_The_invisible_sandwich_generation.pdf

⁹³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/1796/Mike_Brewer

tackling inequality requires broad, sustained action across the labour market, taxation, welfare, and social policy.



<https://youtu.be/Gv1YfAND3es>

5 - Dr Mike Brewer's lecture at Gresham College exploring the generational wealth gap

Housing and demographic challenges



CPC-CG Director Professor Jane Falkingham has been working with Business South to share demographic research that provides critical context for future housing policies locally, nationally and globally.

In March, Professor Falkingham participated in the MIPIM Global Urban Festival⁹⁴ in Cannes representing the UK's Central South region. She was a panellist at the Housing

⁹⁴<https://www.mipim.com/en-gb.html#/>

Matters!⁹⁵ event, highlighting the urgent need to address housing challenges in an increasingly urbanised world.

Housing Matters! brings together investors, developers, local authorities, associations, and urban experts to explore the latest trends in supply and demand, solutions for affordable housing and new housing models, as well as to share visions for the innovative housing of tomorrow.

Professor Falkingham was a panellist in a session that focused on bridging the growing gap between housing supply and demand, shaped by population changes, regulatory pressures, and production cuts. Leading discussions on the importance of finding the right housing solutions, Professor Falkingham talked about the challenges presented by growing and ageing populations.

Speaking about her involvement at the event, Professor Falkingham said: "As a Professor of Demography and Social Policy working on ageing, it's really important for me to be involved in these discussions.

"It's a really exciting time for the Central South over the next few years as we move towards a devolution deal, but we have to make sure we capitalise on that investment and move towards positive growth and regeneration of the area.

"Understanding what type of housing we need and how it can be adapted for the future is really important, particularly in the context of an ageing population."

Other expert panellists included the Head of Nrep Finland, the Co-Head of Fund Management at PATRIZIA Property Investment Managers LLP; the Chair of the Radix Big Tent Housing Commission and Director of Notay Advisory Ltd; and the Co-Founder and CEO of Hudson Valley Property Group, LLC. The panel explored varied global market challenges, noting that while some areas like Finland are facing oversupply, others are struggling to meet growing demand.

Professor Falkingham also attended the latest Business South Housing Group meeting⁹⁶, providing valuable insights into global, national, and regional demographic trends to contextualise the upcoming Vision Document that will inform housing policy across the Central South region for the new Mayor in 2026.

Key highlights from the talk included:

⁹⁵<https://www.mipim.com/en-gb/conferences-events/sessions/sessions-details.3908.233909.housing-matters!-the-trend—supply-does-not-match-demand.html>

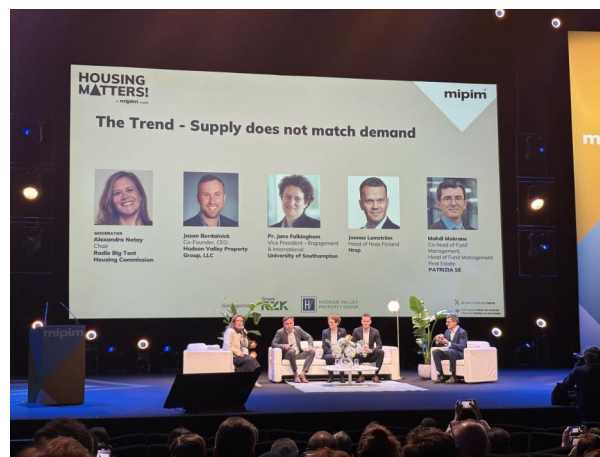
⁹⁶<https://businesssouth.org/26-06-2025-business-south-housing-group-hosts-leading-demography-expert-at-chilworth-manor/>

Global Trends

- The global population is ageing, with the 60+ age group growing at 3% annually.
- Life expectancy continues to rise, and we are living longer, healthier lives.

National Trends (UK)

- By 2045, over half of the UK electorate will be aged 50 or older.
- The age of first-time mothers has increased from 23 in 1970 to 29 today.
- “Boomerang families” are on the rise, with young adults increasingly living at home for longer.
- In 2021, the median age for leaving the parental home was 24, up from 21 in 2011.
- Fewer young adults are forming couples; in 2021, 72% of 25–29-year-olds in relationships were not married or in civil partnerships (up from 56% in 2011).



6 - Professor Jane Falkingham at the Housing Matters opening panel session, MIPIM. Credit: Business South

Regional Trends (Central South)

- All areas in the region experienced population growth between 2011 and 2023, except Gosport and the New Forest.
- Southampton and Portsmouth maintain younger population profiles, while other parts of Hampshire and the Solent skew older.
- In South Hampshire, people tend to live and work locally; in North Hampshire, more residents commute to London.
- The region boasts higher-than-average employment and retirement rates, as well as elevated self-employment.

- House prices in Hampshire and the Solent exceed national averages, with Winchester and East Hampshire among the least affordable areas based on earnings-to-house-price ratios.

Professor Falkingham also highlighted the role of the ONS team in Titchfield and encouraged regional stakeholders to engage with them to support evidence-based planning.

Watch highlights from Professor Falkingham's time at MIPIM:

Embed://<iframe

src="https://www.linkedin.com/embed/feed/update/urn:li:ugcPost:7304935338223849473

?compact=1" height="399" width="504" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen=""

title="Embedded post"></iframe>

Pension change compensation for 'Waspi' women



CPC-CG and CRA members Professor Athina Vlachantoni, Yifan Ge and Professor Jane Falkingham have been exploring the implications of changes to women's state pension age, arguing that denying compensation could be a missed opportunity for meaningful reform.

The research team have co-authored a timely and thought-provoking article for *The Conversation*⁹⁷ with a focus on how state pension changes have affected the 'Waspi' generation. Here, they explain:

"Governments around the world have addressed the challenge of increasing life expectancy and declining birth rates by raising the pension age. The UK is no exception. The challenge this creates for governments is the thorny dual issue of rising care costs for the ageing population while fewer taxpayers support the economy.

Between the 1940s and 2010, the UK state pension age was 65 for men and 60 for women. This gender difference reflected long-standing norms about men's and women's employment patterns, as well as typical age differences at marriage.

These days, there is more acceptance of an equal age for women and men to receive the state pension. But in the process of levelling the playing field, some women feel they have been penalised by the government. So how did it happen?

The Pensions Act 1995⁹⁸ equalised things, setting out a plan to gradually increase women's state pension age to 65. But ten years later, an independent Pensions Commission⁹⁹ report found that a state pension age fixed at 65 was no longer sustainable or affordable.

Between 2007 and 2014 the law changed three times. This accelerated the equalisation of women's and men's state pension age, bringing forward the increase from 65 to 66 by five and a half years to 2020.

Further changes accelerated the increase in the state pension age for both men and women to 67 by 2028. This was eight years earlier than the previous timetable.

Another review¹⁰⁰ suggested increasing the state pension age from 67 to 68 in 2039. This would bring it forward by seven years in response to continued gains in life expectancy.

The Waspi campaign

These changes in the state pension age led to a long-running campaign by a group known as the Waspi¹⁰¹ (Women Against State Pension Inequality) women. This group claims that

⁹⁷<https://theconversation.com/denying-compensation-to-waspi-women-over-pension-changes-could-be-a-missed-opportunity-254018>

⁹⁸<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/26>

⁹⁹<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7cca81e5274a34d8d32f6b/6956.pdf>

¹⁰⁰<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-pension-age-independent-review-final-report>

¹⁰¹<https://www.waspi.co.uk/>

women born between April 6 1950 and April 5 1960 have been badly affected by the way the government equalised the state pension ages.

They are campaigning for compensation – but the government has repeatedly refused¹⁰² to pay out the recommended amounts of up to £2,950 per woman. These payments could have cost the government more than £10 billion¹⁰³.

The group's argument rests on the way the increases in the state pension age were communicated and the amount of notice women were given to plan their finances in retirement. Some women in this cohort were affected by more than one increase in the state pension age.

The Waspi group estimates that about 3.8 million women are affected. Analysis¹⁰⁴ from the House of Commons puts that figure just above 1.5 million women.

Analysis¹⁰⁵ of data from the UK's largest household panel study, the UK Household Longitudinal Study¹⁰⁶, shows that the impact of the rise in the state pension age has been positive for older women's employment rates. But it has been harmful for their wellbeing.

The government's analysis¹⁰⁷ has also shown that younger women in the 1950-58 birth cohort have stayed in employment for longer.

Studies¹⁰⁸ analysing the Family Resources Survey¹⁰⁹ have shown that the women affected by the increased state pension age have a reduced household income, and this effect is larger for those in lower-income households.

The changes in the state pension age, and their effect on women born in the 1950s, has been the topic of both parliamentary debates and (unsuccessful) legal challenges by women affected by these changes¹¹⁰.

In March 2024, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman found¹¹¹ the Department for Work and Pensions had demonstrated maladministration in its communication about the

¹⁰²<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/waspi-women-pension-compensation-labour-b2665736.html>

¹⁰³<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c36eig2jk45o>

¹⁰⁴<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7405/>

¹⁰⁵<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0927537121000841>

¹⁰⁶<https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/>

¹⁰⁷<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-relating-to-state-pension-age-changes-from-the-1995-and-2011-pensions-acts/analysis-relating-to-state-pension-age-changes-from-the-1995-and-2011-pensions-acts#policy-background>

¹⁰⁸<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-pension-economics-and-finance/article/cant-wait-to-get-my-pension-the-effect-of-raising-the-female-early-retirement-age-on-income-poverty-and-deprivation/2E404E7A3B820D430722367196C47F26>

¹⁰⁹<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-resources-survey--2>

¹¹⁰<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7405/>

¹¹¹<https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/sites/default/files/Women's-State-Pension-age-our-findings-on-injustice-and-associated-issues.pdf>

1995 Pensions Act. This resulted in women losing opportunities to make informed decisions about their future. But it found that this did not result in an injustice or the women suffering direct financial loss.

How the UK state pension age was equalised – and raised

Whatever the outcome of the debate about women born in the 1950s, this topic raises broader issues – and lessons – about social policy. Change in social policies is inevitable. Social structures shift, as do norms and patterns in a population's health and economic circumstances.

However, introducing change in a way that is both informed by evidence and transparent is vital for ensuring that reforms are acceptable.

Far from always creating “winners and losers”, social policy change can be a tool that demonstrates a collective sense of responsibility and adaptability to changing times.

Gender differences have consistently permeated employment and pensions, and women tend to fare worse than men. More women are working¹¹² in the UK than ever before and benefit from state, workplace and personal pensions. But gender gaps are persistent across areas that directly affect someone's ability to have enough money to live comfortably in later life.

Women are still less likely to work and to work full-time than men. And they are more likely to provide informal care within and beyond the household (except from age 75 and over). These realities result in lower earnings and a lower capacity to save for later life.

In the broader context of stubborn financial gender inequalities over lifetimes, the issue of changing the state retirement age for women born in the 1950s is a missed opportunity. The government could play a critical part in evening out gender differences for the Waspi women – and for the millions of others coming up after them."

This article is republished from The Conversation¹¹³ under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article¹¹⁴.

Listen to Yifan Ge discuss the research on the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership's podcast, Speaking of Research: Communicating pension policy: Addressing disadvantages for women born in the 1950s¹¹⁵

¹¹²[https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06838/#:~:text=Women in employment,male employment rate was 78.2%.](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06838/#:~:text=Women in employment,male employment rate was 78.2%)

¹¹³<https://theconversation.com/>

¹¹⁴<https://theconversation.com/denying-compensation-to-waspi-women-over-pension-changes-could-be-a-missed-opportunity-254018>

¹¹⁵<https://open.spotify.com/episode/3MJAEq4Yx5JnBBHfdEuGDs>



7 - Listen to Yifan Ge on 'Speaking of Research: The SCDTP podcast'¹¹⁶

Find out more about Yifan's PhD journey in section 12 of this newsletter under the 'Researcher Spotlight'

[CPC-CG Director gives Roger Jowell Memorial Lecture 2025](#)

Professor Falkingham¹¹⁷ was also recently invited to speak about demographic implications for pension policies as part of the Roger Jowell Memorial Lecture 2025¹¹⁸ at City St George's University of London.

During the event, Professor Falkingham gave a presentation entitled, “The New Rush Hour of Life: Balancing paid or unpaid work in mid-life?”, which explored various demographic themes including labour force participation, focusing on gender differences, the impacts of care and unpaid care, as well as the implications for pension policies.

She highlighted that in mid-life, individuals often juggle multiple roles – partner, parent, grandparent, worker, and caregiver, and discussed the need for policies that support workers balancing paid employment with intensive caregiving. Research has also identified that the “double sandwich generation¹¹⁹” has emerged, where individuals care for both ageing parents and grandchildren, often to enable their adult children to remain employed.

Professor Falkingham also spoke about recent legislative changes, including 50+ lives, and the changes to the state pension age, which aim to encourage people to stay in the

¹¹⁶ <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3MJAEg4Yx5JnBBHfdEuGDs>

¹¹⁷ https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/14/Jane_Falkingham

¹¹⁸ https://the-sra.org.uk/SRA/Shared_Content/Events/Event_display.aspx?EventKey=ROGJOW25

¹¹⁹ https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB79_Lone_parents_The_invisible_sandwich_generation.pdf

workforce longer. She also shared some of her work around menopause and employment¹²⁰, including discussions with the Royal Bank of Canada and with Caroline Norris MP.

Watch the full lecture, organised by City, University of London¹²¹, National Centre for Social Research¹²² and the Social Research Association¹²³ below:



https://youtu.be/dFDMT_Kuu84

Ethnic pension gaps in the UK



¹²⁰<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/news/2023/05/government-urged-to-improve-menopause-care-to-keep-women-in-the-workplace.page>

¹²¹<https://www.citystgeorges.ac.uk/>

¹²²<https://natcen.ac.uk/>

¹²³<https://the-sra.org.uk/>

CPC-CG and CRA members Professor Athina Vlachantoni, Professor Jane Falkingham and Professor Maria Evandrou highlight how the ethnic pension gap in the UK leaves minority ethnic communities worse off in retirement than their white British counterparts, with women facing greater disadvantages than men.

In an article published in *The Conversation*¹²⁴, the authors explain the issue in more detail and explore potential policy solutions:

"There's an ethnic pension gap in the UK that leaves people from particular minority ethnic communities worse off in retirement than their white British counterparts. The gap can be measured in several ways – for example, by comparing the pension amount between ethnic communities or measuring the proportion of working-age people from different ethnic groups who are signed up to a workplace pension scheme.

But whichever indicator you use, the evidence shows that people from minority ethnic communities, whether they were born in the UK or not, fare worse than white British people.

Unfortunately, that's not all. Within the minority ethnic population, it is the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities who are faring worse than people from other minority ethnic communities. And women are struggling more than men.

The government's most recent analysis based on the Family Resources Survey¹²⁵ shows that Asian pensioner families (that is, either a single pensioner or a couple that includes at least one pensioner) had the lowest gross income at £500 a week¹²⁶). This compared with £731 a week among pensioner families from the "white other" ethnic group.

Unpicking the causes

But why is there an ethnic pension gap? To understand why it persists, it's helpful to take a few steps back and examine the accumulation of disadvantage. Our research¹²⁷ in the Centre for Research on Ageing¹²⁸ and the ESRC Centre for Population Change¹²⁹ has done just that – unravelling the factors that lead to the gap.

¹²⁴ <https://theconversation.com/why-theres-an-ethnic-pension-gap-in-the-uk-and-how-the-government-could-close-it-248822>

¹²⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/familyresourcesurvey>

¹²⁶ <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/pay-and-income/pensioner-income/latest/>

¹²⁷ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ageing-and-society/article/ethnic-elders-and-pension-protection-in-the-united-kingdom/80CAB978A67BB2A774992D64597AAF8D>

¹²⁸ <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/research/groups/centre-for-research-on-ageing>

¹²⁹ <https://www.cpc.ac.uk/>

We found that working-age people from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities were less likely than their white British counterparts to be in paid work. And once in paid work, they were less likely to work as employees and more likely to be self-employed.

This is important because, over the last 15 years, the UK government has introduced auto-enrolment¹³⁰ in workplace pensions, which means that all workers aged 22 or above and earning at least £10,000 per year are automatically enrolled in their workplace scheme.

Even among employees, we found that workers from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities were less likely to be members of their workplace pension scheme. That is, they were more likely to opt out¹³¹. Among pensioners, we found that those from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities were less likely to be receiving a state or workplace pension, and more likely to be receiving pension credit¹³² (a means-tested benefit for those on low incomes).

Differences between minority ethnic communities in their employment trends then lead to ethnic gaps in pension protection. There are a number of factors at play, including cultural reasons that might affect employment choices and opportunities (particularly among women) and structural reasons affecting the types of jobs and earnings where people from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities find work.

Religious reasons can also affect people's choices about the kinds of investments they make. Under Islamic finance¹³³ guidelines, investing in profit-making ventures – commonly part of workplace pensions – is not permitted.

Recent research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies showed that 16% of Pakistani and 24% of eligible Bangladeshi employees opt out¹³⁴ of a workplace pension, compared to 10% of eligible white employees.

All these reasons are important factors in understanding the ethnic pension gap and are vital issues for the government to address.

So where does this leave government policies to close the gap? Encouraging younger people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities to enter (and crucially, to stay) in the labour market can be the first step.

According to the most recent government data¹³⁵, on average 75% of people aged 16-64 are employed. But this breaks down to 76% for white people, and 57% for Pakistani and 63% for Bangladeshi people.

¹³⁰<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-pensions/joining-a-workplace-pension>

¹³¹<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-pensions/if-you-want-to-leave-your-workplace-pension-scheme#:~:text=If you've been automatically enrolled&text=If you opt out within,your pension until you retire.>

¹³²<https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit>

¹³³https://www.investopedia.com/articles/07/islamic_investing.asp

¹³⁴<https://ifs.org.uk/publications/ethnic-differences-private-pension-participation-after-automatic-enrolment>

¹³⁵<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusbyethnicgroupa09>

Meanwhile, another useful step the government could take would be reducing the £10,000 eligibility threshold¹³⁶ for auto-enrolment. This would allow more low earners to start saving for retirement.

But if more people from minority ethnic communities are going to stick with their workplace pension (or rather if fewer people are going to opt out), the government needs to consider the design and promotion of more sharia-compliant investments. These make workplace pension plans acceptable to Muslim communities. This could be a crucial step in closing the pension gap for future cohorts, and a feasible way forward. These products already exist, after all.

Closing the ethnic pension gap (and the gender gap within it) is vital because the UK's population is both ageing¹³⁷ and becoming more ethnically diverse¹³⁸. About 18%¹³⁹ of the population of England and Wales are from a non-white background (in Scotland it's 4%¹⁴⁰ and in Northern Ireland 3.4%¹⁴¹).

Addressing the ethnic pension gap is vital. It could take the UK a step closer to a society where people from all ethnic communities have the opportunity to reach later life with greater financial security and dignity."

This article is republished from The Conversation¹⁴² under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article¹⁴³.

¹³⁶<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/pensions-and-retirement/pensions-basics/automatic-enrolment-an-introduction>

¹³⁷<https://ageing-better.org.uk/our-ageing-population-state-ageing-2023-4>

¹³⁸<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenlandandwales/census2021#:~:text=The largest increases were seen,%%2C 564%%2C000 in 2011>

¹³⁹<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest/>

¹⁴⁰<https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/ethnicity/>

¹⁴¹<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/census-2021-main-statistics-for-northern-ireland-phase-1-statistical-bulletin-ethnic-group.pdf>

¹⁴²<https://theconversation.com/>

¹⁴³<https://theconversation.com/why-theres-an-ethnic-pension-gap-in-the-uk-and-how-the-government-could-close-it-248822>

Financial preparedness for later life



Further research by CPC-CG and CRA members Professor Athina Vlachantoni, Professor Yuanyuan Yin (Winchester School of Art), Dr Saddaf Naaz Akhtar and Dr Špela Močnik is examining financial preparedness for later life among individuals from the Chinese community in the UK.

The findings reveal a lack of trust in the government and pensions systems, leading to an emphasis on personal savings, self-reliance, and family support for financial security in later life.

The research team used a mixed-methods approach to investigate pension arrangements and retirement planning attitudes using data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (2010 – 2023), photovoice method and focus groups. The main findings were:

- In the UK, individuals from the Chinese community have higher personal pension membership and are more likely to expect to use savings or investments for retirement than any other ethnic group.
- Men are more likely than women to have a personal pension and to expect to use savings or investments for retirement.
- Language barriers and digital exclusion may hinder access to pension information, reinforcing reliance on personal savings.

- Low trust in the government and pension systems drives greater reliance on personal savings, self-sufficiency and family support for financial security in later life.
- Leveraging successful retirement planning models among individuals from the Chinese community can encourage all communities, especially women, to financially prepare for later life, ensuring greater security and financial independence in retirement for everyone.
- Policy responses should develop financial literacy programmes, build trust in UK pension systems, offer financial rewards/incentives, and address language barriers among individuals from minority ethnic groups.

Dr Akhtar¹⁴⁴ said: "The findings from this study show that policymakers must focus on strengthening stability and trust in the formal pension system. Support for those choosing financial independence, with more flexible retirement savings options, should also be available. Improving language and digital accessibility is critical to helping individuals navigate the pensions system.

"With 18.3% of the UK population in the 2021 UK Census identifying as members of ethnic minority groups, understanding the financial preferences of these groups is vital to ensure cultural sensitivity towards financial preferences, and for designing effective financial planning programmes for later life across all UK communities."

Making wise financial decisions across the life course



8 - Professor Vlachantoni and colleagues from CPC-CG and CRA at the Cantell School Outreach session.

As part of the wider 'Promoting inclusivity in pension protection'¹⁴⁵ project, Professor Vlachantoni, Dr Močnik and Professor Yin have also been running outreach events with

¹⁴⁴ https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/1988/Saddaf_Naaz_Akhtar

¹⁴⁵ http://www.cpc.ac.uk/projects/146/Promoting_inclusivity_in_pension_protection_and_other_forms_of_saving_among_men_and_women_from_black_and_minority_ethnic_communities_in_the_UK_a_mixed_methods_study#overview

secondary school pupils in Year 10 and 11 at Cantell School, Southampton. The aim of the sessions is to improve financial preparedness among future cohorts of older people by delivering education on later life, savings and pensions.

In total, the project has delivered three financial resilience training sessions, each engaging around 200 Year 10 and 11 students. Pupil and teacher feedback has been overwhelmingly encouraging and shown a positive impact on the students' knowledge of financial issues and their level of comfort in discussing financial issues with friends and family.

Speaking after one of the events, Professor Vlachantoni said: "Another inspiring day engaging with Cantell secondary school students to talk about financial resilience and making wise decisions over the life course. We had fun playing a board game and making decisions about money coming in/out of the household budget.

"As ever, thank you to amazing colleagues from Cantell School and the Centre for Research on Ageing and ESRC Centre for Population Change and Connecting Generations at the University of Southampton for helping us facilitate the day, and to the ESRC for funding our research project."



9 - Cantell School Outreach session activity.



10 - Cantell School WISE education for all students.



11 - Cantell School outreach session.

Further reading

Financial preparedness for later life among the Chinese community in the UK¹⁴⁶ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 82)

¹⁴⁶https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB82_Financial_preparedness_for_later_life_among_the_Chinese_community_in_the_UK.pdf

Promoting inclusivity in pension protection and other forms of saving among men and women from black and minority ethnic communities in the UK: a mixed methods study¹⁴⁷ (Project information page)

Pension protection among men and women from UK Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities¹⁴⁸ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 80)

Pupil attitudes to ageing, pensions and saving for later life¹⁴⁹ (CPC-CG Policy Briefing 77)

Digital Gender Gaps dashboard updates



CG member Professor Ridhi Kashyap discusses how her team have updated their Digital Gender Gaps dashboard to include subnational estimates of internet use and mobile phone ownership by gender.

"The spread of the internet and mobile phones has been one of the most significant technological revolutions of the 21st century. Digital technologies have become integral to

¹⁴⁷https://www.cpc.ac.uk/projects/146/Promoting_inclusivity_in_pension_protection_and_other_forms_of_saving_among_men_and_women_from_black_and_minority_ethnic_communities_in_the_UK_a_mixed_methods_study#overview

¹⁴⁸https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB80_Pension_protection_among_men_and_women_from_Pakistani_and_Bangladeshi_communities.pdf

¹⁴⁹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/docs/PB77_Pupil_attitudes_to_ageing_pensions_and_saving_for_later_life.pdf

many aspects of our lives and have brought wide-ranging benefits to many, including greater information, better connectivity and access to services in more cost-efficient ways.

These benefits are particularly noticeable for marginalised populations who may otherwise lack access to resources or networks through other means. However, the research shows that women continue to lag behind men in their access to the internet and mobile phones in many parts of the world.

While women and men have largely attained equality in internet access and mobile ownership in high-income countries, we find that women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are 22% less likely to use the internet and 14% less likely to own a mobile phone. Gender gaps in internet use and mobile ownership are especially large in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Our updated Digital Gender Gaps dashboard¹⁵⁰ uses machine learning algorithms to provide subnational estimates of internet use and mobile ownership¹⁵¹ by gender. This is the first ever database of digital access by gender covering 117 LMICs at the subnational level. By knowing how many women use the internet in different parts of a country, researchers could use the dashboard to plan more targeted interventions, such as around sexual and reproductive health, or financial inclusion, with mobile phone apps.

Our subnational estimates show large gender inequalities in internet and mobile ownership within LMICs such as India and Nigeria. In Nigeria, more than 70% of women use the internet in the southern capital city of Lagos, but fewer than 20% use the internet in northern areas such as Kebbi. While more than 75% of women use the internet in India's capital New Delhi, only around 35% do in the northern state of Bihar. These numbers highlight that while digital technologies have spread, their spread is still uneven, both between and within countries.

The Digital Gender Gaps¹⁵² dashboard was developed to track gender inequalities in internet use and mobile ownership. The dashboard is part of the Digital Gender Gaps project which provides regular updates and monthly estimates of internet and mobile adoption by gender. These methods have helped improve coverage of digital gender gaps at the national level, and our data have been used to track progress on the United Nations' global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5¹⁵³ which lists improving women's digital connectivity as a key indicator for achieving gender equality.

Why is digital gender equality so important? Our work has shown how women who own mobile phones and use the internet are more empowered with their own health and

¹⁵⁰<https://www.digitalgendergaps.org/dashboard/>

¹⁵¹https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/qnzsw_v2

¹⁵²<https://www.digitalgendergaps.org/>

¹⁵³<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

decision-making within the household¹⁵⁴. Greater digital connectivity can also bolster social connectedness and exchange between communities¹⁵⁵, relevant for sharing information, for example, around sexual and reproductive health. Research also highlights the value of mobile phones for alleviating impacts of poverty and for enabling women's economic empowerment¹⁵⁶. In professional contexts, women can benefit from the more flexible forms of networking afforded by online platforms¹⁵⁷.

As we stand at the brink of another technological shift, with the increasing use of Artificial Intelligence across multiple domains, we must ensure that women are equal participants in digital society, and not left behind. Technologies can have a positive impact on societies – but only when we close the digital gender gap."

Read the full story from the Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science: Digital Gender Gaps dashboard updated to include subnational estimates¹⁵⁸

Further reading

Expert Comment: What is the 'digital gender gap'?¹⁵⁹ (University of Oxford)

Digital Gender Gaps dashboard¹⁶⁰

Measuring and Understanding Gender Inequalities in Digital Access¹⁶¹ (University of Oxford)

Mapping subnational gender gaps in internet and mobile adoption using social media data¹⁶² (SocArxiv)

Leveraging mobile phones to attain sustainable development¹⁶³ (PNAS)

Social capital mediates knowledge gaps in informing sexual and reproductive health behaviours across Africa¹⁶⁴ (Social Science and Medicine)

Gender gaps in online social connectivity, promotion and relocation reports on LinkedIn¹⁶⁵ (Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media)

¹⁵⁴<https://www.pnas.org/doi/abs/10.1073/pnas.1909326117>

¹⁵⁵<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953624006129>

¹⁵⁶<https://www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/science.aah5309>

¹⁵⁷<https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/31353>

¹⁵⁸<https://www.demography.ox.ac.uk/news/digital-gender-gaps-dashboard-updated>

¹⁵⁹<https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2025-03-11-expert-comment-what-digital-gender-gap>

¹⁶⁰<https://www.digitalgendergaps.org/dashboard/>

¹⁶¹<https://www.digitalgendergaps.org/>

¹⁶²https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/qnzsw_v2

¹⁶³<https://www.pnas.org/doi/abs/10.1073/pnas.1909326117>

¹⁶⁴<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953624006129>

¹⁶⁵<https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/31353>

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls¹⁶⁶ (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs)

Conference activities



CPC and CG researchers have been highly active this year, contributing to international conferences throughout spring and summer. Here is just a small selection of their activities.

In July, CPC-CG supported the 29th Annual Postgraduate Population Studies Conference¹⁶⁷ (PopFest) at the University of Southampton. Organised by PhD students Parth Pandya (University of St Andrews), Izzi Carter (LSE), Clara Girault and Sai Joshi (University of Southampton), the event featured keynote talks from Professor Jane Falkingham and Dr Antonino Polizzi. Delegates joined from across the international population studies community. Lekshmi Prasannan Reeba (LSE) won the poster prize for her work on women's empowerment and fertility intentions in India.

CPC and CG members also featured prominently at the 30th International Population Conference¹⁶⁸ in Brisbane (13–18 July), with contributions from Brienna Perelli-Harris, Hill Kulu, Aasli Abdi Nur, Ridhi Kashyap, Bernice Kuang, Ann Berrington, Vincent Ramos, Sanny

¹⁶⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

¹⁶⁷ https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/916/PopFest_2025_29th_Annual_Postgraduate_Population_Studies_Conference

¹⁶⁸ https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/910/30th_International_Population_Conference

Afable, Joe Butterick, Jason Hilton, Jakub Bijak, Peter W. F. Smith, Joanne Ellison, and Erengul Dodd. Their research featured in sessions on fertility, family planning, adolescent health, menopause, and union formation, with themes including childbearing during conflict, precarity and coresidence, intergenerational proximity, and climate shocks. Digital demography was a key focus, with work on online partnering, 3G access and empowerment, gendered online visibility, and demographic microsimulation. CG members also co-organised pre-conference workshops on gender inequality in digital contexts and kinship modelling.



12 - Lekshmi Prasannan Reeba (LSE) won the poster prize for her work on women's empowerment and fertility intentions in India.



13 - Keynote talk from Professor Jane Falkingham.



14 - Keynote talk from Dr Antonino Polizzi.



15 - PopFest2025 EAPS PhD Networking session.



16 - Organising Committee Chair Parth Pandya closes the conference.

CPC-CG Scotland researchers also organised and took part in the **Third MigrantLife Symposium**¹⁶⁹ at the University of St Andrews (25–26 June). CPC-CG Co-Director Hill Kulu opened the event and chaired the keynote session, while Sarah Christison presented findings on housing and family formation among migrants and their descendants in the UK.

At the 54th British Society of Gerontology Conference¹⁷⁰ (25–27 June, University of Surrey), Athina Vlachantoni chaired a session on inclusive ageing and spoke on pension protection. Lisa Davison presented new research on home adaptations, developed in collaboration with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. Shunqi Zhang presented at the Emerging Researchers in Ageing pre-conference session on the role of the internet and intergenerational support in mitigating older adults' loneliness in China.



17 - MigrantLife Symposium delegates enjoying the sun in St Salvador's Quad outside the Lower College Hall symposium venue.

CPC and CG researchers were also well represented at the **Population Association of America Annual Meeting**¹⁷¹ in Washington DC (10–13 April). CG Co-Director Melinda Mills presented on the genetics of reproductive traits and contributed to a panel on pandemic mortality. Other contributors included Aasli Abdi Nur, Ann Berrington, Bernice Kuang, Brienna Perelli-Harris, Hill Kulu, Julia Mikolai, Katherine Keenan, Mary Abed Al Ahad, Ridhi Kashyap, Saddaf Naaz Akhtar, Sarah Christison, and Vincent Ramos. Research covered migrant life courses, partnership patterns, digital inequalities, housing, ageing, and health across generations. Several members also chaired sessions and took part as discussants.

Catch up with CPC-CG members at the upcoming British Society for Population Studies Conference¹⁷² at Swansea University, 2–4 September. Full session details of our contributions will be posted soon.

You can keep up to date with all of our upcoming conferences and activities on our events calendar¹⁷³.

¹⁶⁹<https://migrantlife.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/migrantlife-symposiums/>

¹⁷⁰https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/918/British_Society_of_Gerontology_Annual_Conference_2025

¹⁷¹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/908/Population_Association_of_America_2025_Annual_Meeting

¹⁷²https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/917/British_Society_of_Population_Studies_Annual_Conference_2025

¹⁷³https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/



18 - CPC-CG and MigrantLife members from the University of St Andrews at the PAA Conference.



19 - Colleagues from the Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science at the PAA Conference.

Researcher spotlight



Professor Melinda Mills MBE awarded Honorary Doctorate



20 - Professor Melinda Mills awarded Honorary Doctorate: Credit: European University Institute

Connecting Generations Co-Director and Director of the Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science, Professor Melinda Mills MBE¹⁷⁴, has been awarded a prestigious Honorary Doctorate from the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, Italy.

¹⁷⁴https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/1797/Melinda_Mills

This distinction recognises her pioneering work across the social sciences, particularly in the areas of family inequality, fertility, methodological innovation, and her trailblazing contributions to sociogenomics, which bridges genetics and the social sciences.

In his laudation, Professor Juho Härkönen (EUI) praised Professor Mills for her "innovative and impactful research," noting: "Interdisciplinary research is in high demand and crucial for understanding today's complex problems."

Professor Mills used the occasion to reflect on the challenges of pushing disciplinary boundaries, highlighting the structural obstacles that interdisciplinary scholars often face, and expressed her deep gratitude to the EUI for their recognition and openness to diverse forms of scholarship:

"Interdisciplinary research is often praised for its potential to address 'big picture' problems and complex challenges, yet the academic structures in which it operates are not designed to support it easily."

As part of the celebration, Professor Mills delivered a keynote lecture on 'From friction to flourishing: Navigating the risks, rewards and long-term advantages of interdisciplinary research'.

Read more about the lecture on the EUI event page¹⁷⁵.

You can also watch the full award ceremony below (Mills' award begins at minute 34):



<https://youtu.be/r1sNRApXhr8>

21 - Professor Melinda Mills collects her Honorary Doctorate from the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, Italy.

¹⁷⁵<https://www.eui.eu/events?id=579037>

New learned societies appointments for Professor Jackie Wahba OBE



22 - Professor Jackie Wahba nominated as a Trustee of the Academy of Social Sciences' Council. Credit: Academy of Social Sciences.

CPC-CG member Professor Jackie Wahba OBE¹⁷⁶ has recently been elected as a Trustee of the Academy of Social Sciences' Council, as well as appointed as a Founding Fellow of the Royal Economic Society. As one of five new Trustees of the Academy of Social Sciences' Council¹⁷⁷, Jackie joins 15 existing Council members who are collectively responsible for the governance of the Academy. Following news of her election, Professor Wahba said:

"I'm delighted to be elected as a Trustee of the Academy of Social Sciences. I look forward to supporting its mission to champion social science and its impact across society."

Professor Wahba has also been appointed as a Founding Fellow of the Royal Economic Society¹⁷⁸ for demonstrating impact in the economics profession. Fellows will work with the Society on their vision that economics be understood, advanced and applied for the good of society and the world.

Professor Wahba FAcSS is Professor of Economics at the Department of Economics at the University of Southampton. She leads the 'Migration connecting generations'¹⁷⁹ project as part of ESRC Connecting Generations.

She is an applied labour economist specialising in international migration and displacement. In 2020, she was awarded an OBE for her contributions to economic policy. She served as a member of the UK Migration Advisory Committee from 2012 to 2021.

¹⁷⁶https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/51/Jackline_Wahba

¹⁷⁷<https://acss.org.uk/news/five-new-trustees-elected-to-the-academys-council/>

¹⁷⁸<https://res.org.uk/the-royal-economic-society-announces-founding-fellows/>

¹⁷⁹https://www.cpc.ac.uk/projects/140/Migration_connecting_generations#overview

Emily Barker wins first place at AI Innovation 'IGNITION' Startup Hackathon



23 - Emily Barker (centre) wins first place at AI Innovation 'IGNITION' Startup Hackathon¹⁸⁰. Credit: Responsible AI UK.

CPC member Dr Emily Barker¹⁸¹ was part of a team that won first place at a recent three-week national hackathon on responsible AI for social good. Emily, with Ali Shakiba, William Hughes and Sanzhar Korganbayev from the University of Southampton's Optoelectronics Research Centre¹⁸², worked on 'Epiblink', a novel solution targeting photosensitive epilepsy. The idea is around glasses that help to reduce/stop photosensitive epileptic seizures (and indirectly migraines).

Dr Barker commented:

"I am delighted to have worked on the winning idea during the hackathon. I have epilepsy so it is a subject close to me and it is great to be able to use my knowledge and skills to work towards real-world solutions. It's important to demonstrate that AI can be used for social good to balance out the focus on the often-discussed downsides of AI."

AI Innovation IGNITION¹⁸³ is a social impact-focused initiative designed to inspire and launch ideas. The hackathon brought together researchers interested in societal and economic challenges using AI.

¹⁸⁰ https://www.linkedin.com/posts/responsibleaiuk_winners-epilepsy-betterhealth-activity-7338977728487989248-4lpX?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAElj30YBkUh2vyOV7wuNKuFb8TRaV0Wxbuo

¹⁸¹ https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/1531/Emily_Barker

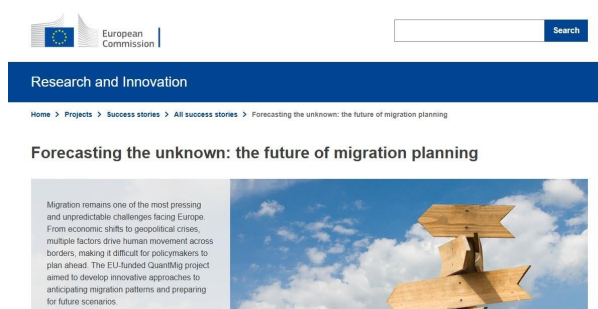
¹⁸² <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/faculties-schools-departments/optoelectronics-research-centre>

¹⁸³ <https://rai-ignition-startup-hackathon.devpost.com/>

Whether about solving climate change challenges or improving healthcare, the aim was to support early career researchers to develop their ideas through findings suitable team-mates, mentors, and access a range of relevant datasets.

Finalists were also invited to join the post-hackathon accelerator programme which serves as a launchpad for impactful startups committed to creating a better world, including help from Future Worlds¹⁸⁴, the tech startup accelerator at the University of Southampton.

QuantMig recognised by the European Commission as a Horizon 2020 Success Story



Professor Jakub Bijak¹⁸⁵'s EU-funded QuantMig project¹⁸⁶ has been recognised by the European Commission's Research and Innovation services as a Horizon 2020 success story for research that demonstrates exceptional innovation, visibility, and societal benefit.

Migration has become a central topic of European policy discussions, particularly following the refugee crisis of 2015. The QuantMig project, launched in 2020, aimed to move beyond traditional forecasting models by embracing uncertainty as a core element of migration analysis. Instead of trying to predict exact migration numbers, the team focused on mapping possible scenarios and identifying risks, thus equipping policymakers with better tools for preparing for unexpected events.

“Migration forecasting has often been limited by what we don’t know. QuantMig put that uncertainty front and centre, helping decision makers understand both the gaps in knowledge and the practical steps they can take to mitigate risks,” explains Professor Bijak.

QuantMig developed ways to model migration scenarios, and their impacts on populations and labour forces, across 31 European countries, while also analysing displacement events such as natural disasters or conflicts to improve crisis preparedness.

The consortium brought together seven leading institutions, along with an external Canadian research partner, forming an interdisciplinary team of demographers, economists, statisticians and migration policy experts. Their collaboration resulted in a seamlessly integrated research process where data analysis, scenario development and policy engagement worked hand in hand.

¹⁸⁴<https://futureworlds.com/>

¹⁸⁵https://www.cpc.ac.uk/about_us/the_team/5/Jakub_Bijak

¹⁸⁶<https://www.quantmig.eu/>

The project's work resonated beyond academia, influencing discussions within key European agencies such as the EU Agency for Asylum¹⁸⁷ and Frontex¹⁸⁸. Among its achievements was the creation of a comprehensive European migration hub, providing high-quality, open-access data on migration estimates, policies and scenarios, to inform future research and decision-making.

QuantMig's findings highlight the importance of better data collection and migration scenario planning. The team hopes their work will inspire future research and policy initiatives to build on their approach, ensuring Europe remains prepared for migration challenges ahead. Professor Bijak adds:

"Understanding migration isn't about pinpointing exact numbers; it's about being ready for what's possible. We've helped lay the groundwork for a more informed and flexible response to future migration trends."

The project also published an open-access book¹⁸⁹, designed to distil complex migration dynamics into an accessible format for policymakers and the public, ensuring their findings are available to the widest possible audience.

"There is one last ingredient to the project's success," notes Bijak, "and that is our use of open science. We made everything open by design from the outset, including the final book publication, and it is paying back handsomely."

Read the full story on the European Commission website: Forecasting the unknown: the future of migration planning¹⁹⁰

PhD journeys

Yifan Ge is a PhD student funded by Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK) and the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership (SCDTP), based in the Department of Gerontology at the University of Southampton. Her research aims to use linked administrative data and survey datasets to identify the subgroups of women most affected by the recent increases in the UK State Pension Age. Yifan's PhD project is supervised by Professor Athina Vlachantoni and Professor Jane Falkingham. Here, she shares insights into her research so far.

"My interest in research on welfare and pension systems began during a module called Wicked Problems: Clumsy Solutions – Leadership in Healthcare while I was pursuing my

¹⁸⁷<https://euaa.europa.eu/>

¹⁸⁸<https://frontex.europa.eu/>

¹⁸⁹<https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollbook-oa/book/9781035319800/9781035319800.xml>

¹⁹⁰<https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/en/projects/success-stories/all/forecasting-unknown-future-migration-planning>

bachelor's degree at the University of Manchester. At that time, the world was grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic. Beyond the scheduled curriculum, the lecturer, Dr Lawrence Benson, also introduced updated knowledge and practical experiences from the healthcare industry. Older people faced significant challenges during this period. I was fortunate to have had an insightful discussion with Dr Benson about the pension systems in the UK and China, which are among the most critical factors influencing quality of life and health status.

Following that, I obtained my master's degree from the University of Nottingham Ningbo China, which allowed me to deepen my skills in data analysis and complete a dissertation on the health impacts of delayed retirement in China. Based on the findings, I began to realise that increasing the statutory pension age can affect individuals' quality of life from multiple perspectives—not only in terms of health—and that there may be significant heterogeneities based on gender, education level, and other factors. Since then, I have developed a strong interest in gerontology and recognised that adjusting the minimum retirement age is an effective measure widely adopted by governments to address global ageing challenges. However, such policy changes may also create challenges related to communication and the time required for individuals to respond and adapt.

In 2023, I was delighted to start my PhD project titled 'Women's pension entitlement in the UK: Understanding who may have been left under-provisioned by recent changes in State Pension Age' supervised by CPC-CG member Professor Athina Vlachantoni and CPC-CG Director Professor Jane Falkingham. The State Pension Age (SPA), which is the earliest age at which individuals can claim the state pension, has increased for UK women over the past 20 years from 60 to 66, as announced by several Pension Acts. However, most of the women affected, especially those born in the 1950s, have stated that the policy was poorly communicated by the Department for Work and Pensions, making it difficult for them to re-enter the labour market or reschedule their pension plans. As a result, a long-term campaign called 'Women Against State Pension Age Inequality (WASPI)' was formed. Recent data shows that WASPI women constitute one in twelve of the electorate in the average constituency, suggesting they may have considerable influence on election outcomes and future government decisions. Additionally, the Pension Act 2014 has announced that the SPA will increase to 67 or 68 in the future.

Several studies have shown the impact of the increased SPA on WASPI women, and my research will use both survey and administrative datasets to further identify which subgroups of women have been most affected. Hopefully, the findings from my research can help the government formulate a tailored public communication strategy for future increases in SPA or other pension policy reforms, as well as design reasonable compensation for WASPI women who have already been impacted. I am honoured to further develop my PhD project and look forward to becoming more involved in other social impact projects after completing my PhD."

Listen to Yifan discuss her research on the SCDTP podcast, Speaking of Research: Communicating pension policy: Addressing disadvantages for women born in the 1950s¹⁹¹ and read The Conversation article 'Denying compensation to 'Waspi' women over pension changes could be a missed opportunity¹⁹²' (also in section 7 of this newsletter).



24 - Yifan Ge, PhD student in Gerontology at the University of Southampton.

¹⁹¹ <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3MJAEg4Yx5JnBBHfdEuGDs>

¹⁹² <https://theconversation.com/denying-compensation-to-waspi-women-over-pension-changes-could-be-a-missed-opportunity-254018>

CPC-CG seminars



Many of our seminars are now available to watch again on our YouTube channel, so do take a look if you missed out or would like to see the presentations again.

Embed://<iframe width="560" height="315"

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Dr Bo Hu, London School of Economics and Political Science

Projected costs of long-term care for older people in England: The impacts of housing improvements¹⁹³

Dr Matthew Wallace, University of Salford

International migration, mortality, and national population health¹⁹⁴

Dr Giorgio Di Gessa, University College London

Looking after grandchildren – Latest findings from ELSA¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³<https://youtu.be/fKURDIYjNX0>

¹⁹⁴https://youtu.be/oTHM9_SWxk

¹⁹⁵<https://youtu.be/X1JuPAR4TZY>

Professor Christina Victor, Brunel University London

Is loneliness really bad for older people?¹⁹⁶

Dr Christian Dudel, Max Planck-University of Helsinki Centre for Social Inequalities in Population Health

Smoking and the length of working life¹⁹⁷

Dr Emily Barker, University of Southampton

Are migration and automation possible solutions for Europe's ageing challenges?¹⁹⁸

Dr Traute Meyer and Dr Paul Bridgen, University of Southampton, and Dr Lisa Davison, University of Stirling

Retrenchment without effect: Exploring the link between pension reforms and public pension adequacy of new retirees in seven European countries (1993–2020)¹⁹⁹

Dr Mariana Sousa Leite, Cardiff University

Psychosocial care to promote patients' adjustment to the end of unsuccessful fertility treatment²⁰⁰

Professor Nissa Finney, University of St Andrews

Community resilience in Scotland: Neighbourhood population change, age mix and place-making in a context of ageing populations²⁰¹

Professor Anna Tarrant, University of Lincoln

Partnering and parenting in the context of young fatherhood: How young fathers navigate family complexity, intimacy, and intergenerational ties²⁰²

Also available on the CPC-CG YouTube channel are recordings of our Connecting Generations Thought Leader talks²⁰³, which cover a range of intergenerational themes.

Keep an eye on our events calendar²⁰⁴ for our latest events and activities, and our upcoming 2025/26 seminar schedule.

¹⁹⁶https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/925/Joint_PHRGCPC_CG_Seminar_Christina_Victor

¹⁹⁷<https://youtu.be/dUDWe9sIUNY>

¹⁹⁸<https://youtu.be/R9fMp5nkPK4>

¹⁹⁹<https://youtu.be/4oWzJ-QFhQU>

²⁰⁰<https://youtu.be/JKsZx6vk4u0>

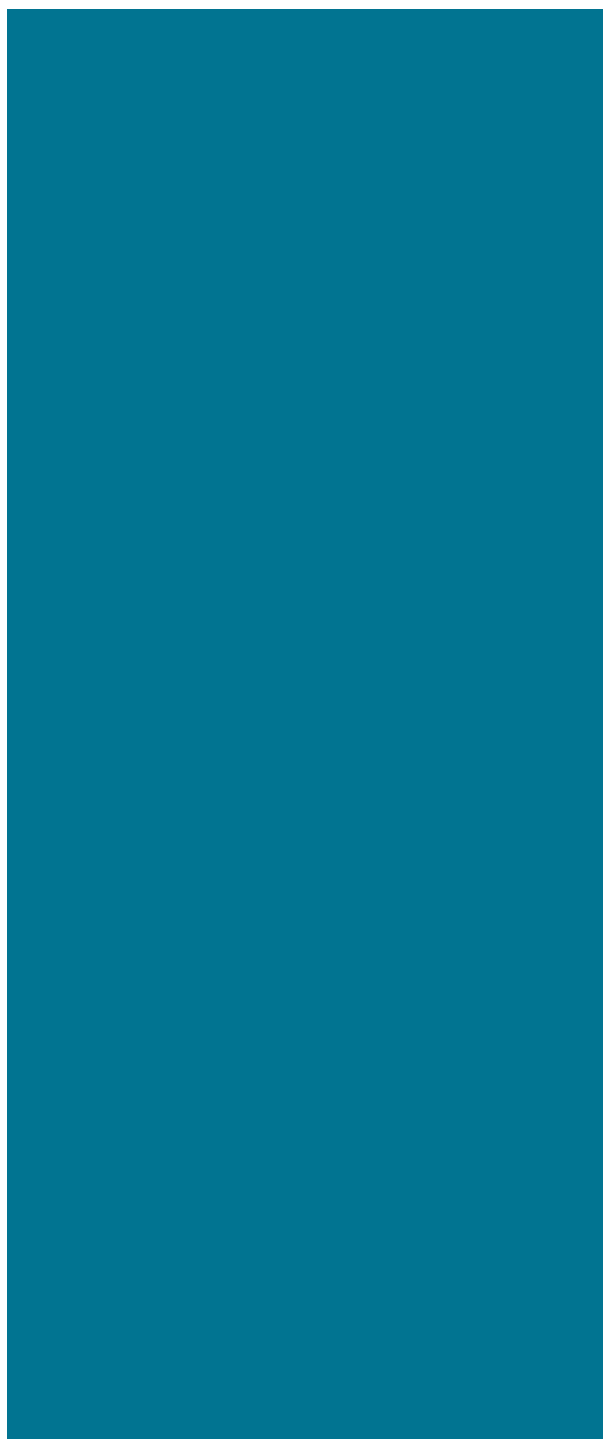
²⁰¹<https://youtu.be/znyHO7JbjJA>

²⁰²<https://youtu.be/1VI-9v7aYvs>

²⁰³https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkgOUZN6uhwPEcUfs_SEQxi_ZwnvtPBs0&si=Aq6rkzEg5Q29m5fW

²⁰⁴https://www.cpc.ac.uk/activities/full_events_calendar/

Keep in touch



To discover more about our work, visit the CPC-CG website: www.cpc.ac.uk²⁰⁵

To subscribe to this newsletter and keep up-to-date with research activity, news and events, please register at: www.cpc.ac.uk/news/newsletter²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵<http://www.cpc.ac.uk/>

²⁰⁶<http://www.cpc.ac.uk/news/newsletter>

For our latest research updates you can also follow CPC and CG on X **@CPCpopulation**²⁰⁷ **@ConnectingGens**²⁰⁸ and find us on Bluesky²⁰⁹, Facebook²¹⁰, LinkedIn²¹¹, **Mastodon**²¹², Scoop.it!²¹³ and YouTube²¹⁴.

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²⁰⁷<https://twitter.com/CPCpopulation>

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²¹²<https://sciences.social/@CPCpopulation>

²¹³<https://www.scoop.it/topic/centre-for-population-change>

²¹⁴<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe1EGHJ15DFVTXqBH9UEqBg>

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