

## **PPI Roundtable Write-Up**

### **From Payslip to Pension: Life Course Impacts on Retirement Saving Among Low Earners Part Three: Projection of Retirement Outcomes for Low Earners**

#### **Overview**

On Wednesday 28 January 2026, the Pensions Policy Institute (PPI) launched the third output in the [From Payslip to Pension: Life Course Impacts on Retirement Saving Among Low Earners series](#). Part three is the third of five outputs in the series and investigates the life courses of people who experience low earning. A PPI Roundtable was held on that date to mark release of the publication.

The [From Payslip to Pension: Life Course Impacts on Retirement Saving Among Low Earners series](#) has been funded by a grant from [The Nuffield Foundation](#). The project is an evidence-based deep dive into the long-term challenges faced by low earners in building retirement savings. It will run until summer 2026 and consist of five individual outputs. [The first report in this series](#) explored the hidden patterns, revealing how factors such as gender, motherhood, self-employment, and qualifications shape lifetime earnings and how this carries implications for pension outcomes. [The second report in this series](#) explored the working life affordability of pension saving for representative profiles of persistent low earners.

This report [Part Three: Practicality of Saving for Low Earners](#) released as the Pensions Commission considers adequacy, explores the retirement outcomes for these representative profiles under current pensions policy.

Low earning, in this research, means earning less than a full-time living wage, and persistent means being a low earner for an extended period of time. Based on longitudinal data, this research lays the foundation for a new approach to more inclusive pensions policy.

The Roundtable was held as a virtual session and was chaired by [Dr Suzy Morrissey FCA, Deputy Director, PPI](#). It was attended by around 20 people representing organisations identified as having an interest in the research area, the PPI Supporters group, and PPI Governors. Philip welcomed attendees on behalf of the PPI. John Upton, Policy Analyst at the PPI, presented the key findings from the report.

#### **Research Findings**

[John Upton, Policy Analyst \(PPI\)](#), summarised the findings of the research to date:

Representative profiles identified within the research were:

- A mother in a high income household
- A mother in a low income household
- A highly qualified woman
- A Precariously employed man

Exploring the outcomes of these individuals reveals that all face different adequacy risks. All profiles' pension adequacy depends on home ownership or retiring with a partner. "Replacement rate" and "basket of goods" methodologies each reveal different inadequacies for different profiles, which may be masked by the other methodology. It is particularly important to question assumptions around those who will depend entirely on the state pension for their retirement income, and those who will have low earnings earlier in life, before having higher earnings, and a higher standard of living later in working life.

## **Roundtable discussion**

The roundtable discussion was held under the Chatham House Rule.

The discussion started by examining the modelling parameters, and how they might affect the results. These particularly examined the role of benefits and pension credit, and the distinction between this report's approach of modelling a theoretical "frozen in time" generation, under current policy throughout life, rather than a specific cohort with unique historical circumstances. As well as pension credit and state pension eligibility, the discussion focused on disability related benefits, and the distinction between qualifying for disability related benefits in working life and retirement.

The discussion then moved on to discuss whether the new pensions commission ought to use multiple measures of adequacy. The report highlighted that different methodologies may downplay inadequacy for different low earners, and audience members highlighted that perhaps even three or four approaches to measuring adequacy might be needed to fully account for this. Audience members highlighted that this, of course, introduces practical difficulties and that historical attempts to define adequacy standards have struggled to fully capture all nuances, particularly with respect to housing costs. Audience members also highlighted that even within adequacy measures there are nuances, such as approaches to defining working life income for the purposes of consumption smoothing. The discussion also explored adequacy measures that take housing into account, and the data gaps that make it challenging to model housing as part of an overall adequacy measure.

The discussion then moved on to alternative saving arrangements, such as non-contingent employer contributions and sidecar savings. Attendees described their experience of member perceptions of different options, noting that members may have different views of these concepts beyond their intended purpose. Other attendees highlighted that any alternative saving arrangement would need to be simple and understandable, as well as well perceived by members. The discussion also covered auto-escalation, including the roles and capabilities of employers and policy to ensure that appropriate contribution rates were kept across employers and sectors.

Finally, the roundtable touched on policy options which might reveal how outcomes for different profiles would be affected by alternative policy. These will be explored in depth in a separate discussion to invite expert opinions.

**Next Steps:** The fourth part of the series will be published in May 2026.

### **From Payslip to Pension: Life Course Impacts on Retirement Saving Among Low Earners series**

**An independent report by the**

Pensions Policy Institute  
**PPI**



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