A glimmer of light on the horizon?

What women from Britain's ethnic minority communities have to say about retirement finances

2026

IGG Independent Governance Group

LCP powering possibility

Smart Pension

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Executive Summary

The existence of a substantial gap between the private pension wealth of men and women has long been documented. Latest official figures suggest that the typical woman has not much more than half the pension wealth of the typical man.

But pension inequalities have many dimensions, and there is also growing evidence of an **'ethnicity' pension gap**. Whilst good data is much less readily available, a series of relatively recent studies has found that people who are part of Britain's ethnic minority communities typically have significantly lower pensions than their white British counterparts.

This report is on the intersection between these groups.

In this research, we aim to provide an in-depth understanding of how women from different communities make financial provision for later life. In doing so, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of how far pension disadvantages apply to women or members of ethnic minorities, and how far there are specific issues for women from particular communities.

The report is based on more than **12 hours of focus groups**, undertaken during the Summer of 2025. The research was facilitated by Opinium Research and involved contributions from more than fifty women across a range of ethnic minorities, with separate groups for older and younger women. The focus groups were followed up by short individual interviews with six participants whose comments are also featured in this report.

Whilst the motivation for this report was about tackling pension disadvantages, our research findings offer some glimmers of hope.

In particular:

- The relative disadvantage faced by women from ethnic minorities could be starting to fall. This mainly reflects generational differences, as younger women generally have higher levels of qualification and are much more likely to be in paid work and aspire to financial independence than previous generations
- Although there is a generally low level of knowledge about pensions and some mistrust, there is also considerable hunger for information and explanation. There was clear evidence that if these women felt they knew and understood better how pensions worked and what they could deliver, that they would be more likely to engage

A very wide range of issues was raised during the course of these focus groups, but we were able to identify five key themes:

- A generational shift, with younger women much more likely to be – and expect to be – financially independent, relying much less on other family members, compared with previous generations;
- A relatively low baseline level of knowledge, understanding and trust around pensions;
- A desire for accessible information about pensions and savings;

- Evidence of a wide range of strategies being used to save for later life, well beyond pensions;
- Strong hopes and dreams for later life, but anxiety about the ability to attain those goals.

These conversations give us room for cautious optimism about the potential for reducing the pensions disadvantage experienced by women from ethnic minorities in Britain. Although pension understanding and knowledge were low, this did not generally reflect a lack of interest or willingness to engage. Instead, our research has highlighted some of the types of information and forms of communication that might be more effective in reaching these women than traditional approaches.

More fundamentally, although employment rates amongst women from ethnic minorities remain lower than for white British women, the gap has closed considerably in recent decades, and this is likely to feed through into improved retirement savings outcomes in years to come.

The challenge for the pensions industry is to recognise the diverse characteristics and lived experience of the members of modern workplace pension schemes and to meet their very real hunger to know more about pensions. We believe that the opportunity is there for the story told by successive reports on pension gaps to change, and we commit to being part of that drive for change.

01 Background

The existence of a gender pensions gap has long been documented.

The former state pension system was created at a time when men were expected to be the main breadwinners in a couple, and married women were largely assumed to be financially dependent upon their husbands.

At the same time, in the workplace, membership of high-quality occupational pensions was dominated by men, with some women even prevented from joining such schemes until the 1990s. The latest estimates[1] from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) suggest that in the early 2020s, the average man in his late 50s had private pension wealth of £156,000 compared with just £81,000 for the average woman – a 'gender pension gap' in private pensions of 48%, compounding historic inequalities in state pensions.

But there is also growing evidence of an 'ethnicity pension gap'.

Robust data on the scale of the problem, especially for particular ethnic groups, can be difficult to assemble because of the relatively small number of people from ethnic minorities included in the sample surveys often used to construct statistics[2].

But research published in 2020[3] suggested that in 2017-18 the average pensioner from an ethnic minority group had an income 24.4% lower than their white counterpart, an annual gap of over £3,000 in that year. Unfortunately, the data source used (the DWP's 'Family Resources Survey') does not provide samples large enough to allow for an understanding of the position of specific ethnic minority groups.

Further research undertaken in 2022[4] was based on a specially conducted survey of employees aged 30-50, with a boosted sample of people from ethnic minorities. This found that "…at £52,333, the average minority ethnic person's pension pot is less than half the size of the average white British person's £114,941" and that "nearly seven in 10 of minority respondents have no pension pot at all".

[1] Gender Pensions Gap in Private Pensions - GOV.UK
[2] Some of these challenges were discussed by the Pensions Policy Institute in its Briefing Note: 20220818 PPI BN132 data from ethnic minority groups.pub
[3] Measuring-the-ethnicity-pensions-gap-Final-Jan-2020.pdf
[4] the-ethnicity-pensions-gap-report.pdf

The published report does not provide any more detailed estimates for specific ethnic groups.

How many women are there in Britain in different ethnic groups?

Although we refer throughout this report to ‘ethnic minorities’, the proportion of the female population of England and Wales whose ethnicity is other than White British is rising steadily - from around 1 in 5 in the 2011 census to around 1 in 4 in the 2021 census. This is shown in the table below, which is based on the entire female population (and therefore includes both those under and over working age).

Our report is primarily concerned with Black and Asian women, though many of the issues that we raise will be of wider relevance. The table shows that this group has risen from 10.7% of the population in 2011 (7.3% Asian and 3.4% Black) to 13.4% in 2021 (9.2% Asian and 4.2% Black). The fastest growth has been seen amongst Indian, Pakistani and Black African women.

In total, there were roughly 3 million Black or Asian women (and girls) in 2011, and this number stood at just over 4 million in 2021.

This table suggests that a rising proportion of pension scheme members are likely to come from these groups. Pension scheme providers, trustees and advisers will increasingly need to understand the diverse needs of these groups if they are to meet their needs effectively.

Table. Ethnicity of females in England and Wales from the 2011 and 2021 UK census

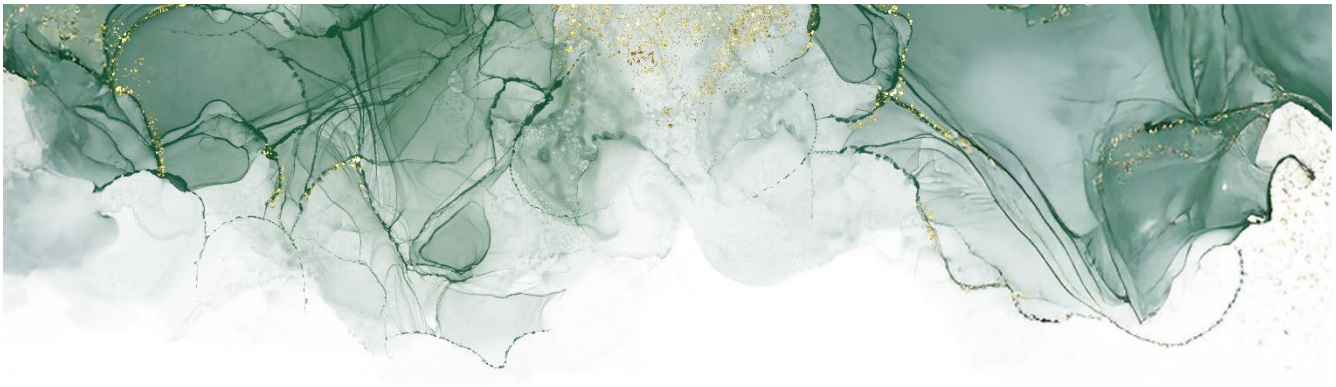
Ethnicity	Census 2011 (counts)	% of total	Census 2021 (counts)	% of total
All	**28,502,536**	**100.0%**	**30,420,195**	**100.0%**
Asian	**2,093,374**	**7.3%**	**2,807,955**	**9.2%**
Bangladeshi	216,330	0.8%	321,555	1.1%
Chinese	207,113	0.7%	245,865	0.8%
Indian	693,038	2.4%	933,035	3.1%
Pakistani	548,296	1.9%	790,415	2.6%
Asian other	428,597	1.5%	517,085	1.7%
Black	**966,690**	**3.4%**	**1,266,695**	**4.2%**
Black African	509,829	1.8%	779,940	2.6%
Black Caribbean	317,888	1.1%	337,100	1.1%
Black other	138,973	0.5%	149,655	0.5%
Mixed	**612,867**	**2.2%**	**876,085**	**2.9%**
White	**24,578,477**	**86.2%**	**24,851,905**	**81.7%**
White British	22,966,879	80.6%	22,555,435	74.1%
Other	**251,128**	**0.9%**	**617,555**	**2.0%**

Source: Authors' calculations based on: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/male-and-female-populations/latest/

On average, both women and members of ethnic minority groups are likely to be at a disadvantage when it comes to later life finances. And it seems reasonable to conclude that at the intersection of these two groups – women from ethnic minorities – disadvantage is likely to be particularly acute.

If we are to tackle this issue, we cannot treat people from ethnic minorities as a single, homogeneous group. People from different ethnic groups will have different economic situations, different family structures, different cultures and different outlooks. And the experiences of these groups are likely to vary for generations born and raised in the UK compared with those who migrated to the UK later in life.

Understanding the reasons why women (in particular) from ethnic minority groups suffer pension disadvantage means listening to their voices and hearing first-hand the challenges which they face in building up the same pensions as their white counterparts or what drives them to save differently. Only then can we design policies and processes which will help to overcome these barriers. Giving a voice to these women is the purpose of this report.



02 Methodology

Summary of approach

The aim of this research was to understand the attitudes and experiences of women from ethnic minority backgrounds in relation to pensions and later-life financial planning. We also explored how experiences and attitudes vary across generations. We were keen to identify any common themes among all those involved, as well as areas of divergence between ethnic groups and between non-White British groups and their average white British counterparts. We worked with Opinium Research, an independent insight agency, to conduct qualitative research between August and September 2025. We conducted 8 online focus groups, speaking to a total of 53 women from different ethnic minority groups across the UK.

After the focus groups, Opinium conducted 6 follow up 20-minute online interviews with selected participants from the focus groups. Excerpts from the recordings of these interviews form part of the output from this research.

Who we spoke to

Each focus group included 5-7 participants and lasted for 90 minutes. Four of the groups included ‘younger’ women of working age (aged 30-44), while the other four included ‘older’ women (aged 45-59). Within each age band, participants were grouped by broad ethnic group as follows:

- Indian / Sri Lankan
- Pakistani / Bangladeshi
- Afro-Caribbean
- Black African

These groups cover most of the largest non-white ethnic minority communities in the UK, based on the 2021 census[5].

Within each group, we aimed to include a mix of social-economic groups.

[5] See: https://tinyurl.com/4zarfecb

Below is a sample frame outlining the number of participants in each group:

8x online Focus Groups (90mins) – 53 participants total							
Pakistani/Bangladeshi		**Indian/Sri Lankan**		**African**		**Caribbean**	
G1: Aged 30-45	G2: Aged 45+	G3: Aged 30-45	G4: Aged 45+	G5: Aged 30-45	G6: Aged 45+	G7: Aged 30-45	G8: Aged 45+
7	7	7	7	5	6	7	7

Participants were recruited through an agency that specialises in reaching individuals from various ethnic minority groups.

Moderators of the focus groups were ethnically matched with participants to enable a comfortable and open research environment and to facilitate cultural context and understanding of the discussions. As observers, we were able to feed through to the moderator thoughts on any questions or areas we felt would be beneficial to explore further.

This report includes extensive anonymised quotes from these discussions, identified only by age/ethnic group, to illustrate the issues raised and to give these women a ‘voice’, while keeping their identities private. To preserve the authenticity of these quotes, we have, in general, not edited for grammar or factual accuracy.

While the findings featured in this report are valuable in demonstrating the views of women from the ethnic minority groups included in this research, it’s worth noting that this is a qualitative piece of research. As such, the findings are illustrative rather than providing a comprehensive view of these different ethnic group experiences.

What we discussed

Moderators used a semi-structured discussion guide to ensure the key research objectives were covered, while leaving room for spontaneous discussion and to adapt to the concerns and language of the particular group. We also made efforts not to focus too heavily on “pensions” as the only form of later life saving, leaving room for participants’ own views and norms around the idea to emerge first.

The guide was structured around the research topics below:

- Attitudes and behaviours towards financially preparing for the future
- Barriers to financial preparedness for the future
- Support and communication needs when it comes to financially preparing for the future

03 Key themes

With twelve hours of discussion, plus a further six follow-up interviews, involving more than fifty women in total, a huge range of points were made and issues discussed. We have tried – with difficulty - to distil this wealth of material into a set of five ‘key themes’ which emerged from those discussions. Where possible, we have commented on how consistent these themes were across the different groups and how different the groups' perspectives were.

The five key themes were:

1. **A generational shift**
2. **Insufficient knowledge and a lack of trust in pensions**
3. **A desire for accessible information about pensions and savings**
4. **The wide range of strategies used to save for later life**
5. **Strong hopes and dreams for later life, but anxiety about the ability to attain those goals**

In this section, we set out these themes in more detail, illustrated by extensive quotes from the participants in our research.

A. A generational shift

Participants in our younger age groups had markedly different assumptions and attitudes to paid work compared to older groups. This was particularly striking in the groups involving Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, where women have historically had much lower levels of engagement with paid work than amongst other groups.

In general, older women, some of whom were first-generation migrants to the UK, had more traditional attitudes, seeing a woman's role as focused on home and family. Younger women, who on average were more likely to have higher levels of formal qualifications, and more likely to have been born and raised in the UK, tended to assume that they would combine any family responsibilities with paid work. This was especially true if they were looking to buy a home either on their own or with a partner:

> *"And women in those days as well, if you didn't work, you didn't pay any stamps and if you did work, you could only work part time. Especially if you had children. It was very different. Yeah, you know, it was just pretty poor for women." [Caribbean, 45+ group]*

> *"When I look at it from my family, my mum's mum, she got married to my granddad when she was 13. He went out to work, she stayed at home. But when it comes to my mum.. she went out to work when she was 15. But when she got her first paycheck. My granddad took it off her and wouldn't even let her buy a pair of shoes." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 45+ group]*

> *"I come from a family of eight and my mum never worked and my dad was a bus driver [but] we've all been to university, all got educated. We could have chosen not to but I suppose we decided to go. And so I think it boils down to ... education. We're all independent, we all do our own thing, we've all got full time jobs, we've got good careers." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]*

> *"I think now the narrative has changed a little bit, but I think if you were at home before and you're solely looking after the kids, you wouldn't even consider pension because your husband's providing for everything. You wouldn't even know what was going through money wise. Your sole responsibility was to look after the children, to cook, to clean and all of that. And it's only now that women are in the workforce, especially from ethnic backgrounds are more like, okay, you know, there's pension, there's savings, there's having my own money and being financially independent." [African, 30-45 group]*

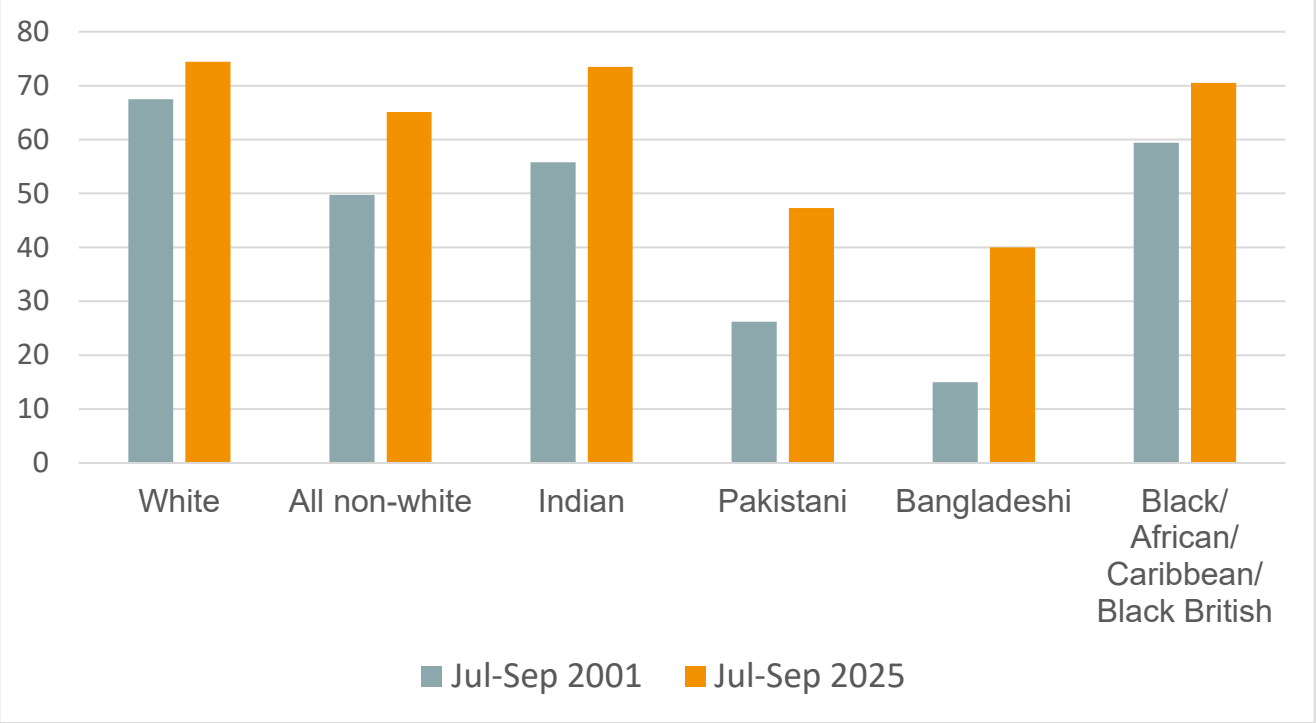
Whilst expectations of paid work have clearly changed over time, there remain marked differences in employment levels between different ethnic groups, which in turn will tend to feed through to differences in pension outcomes between women in those groups.

Evidence of these differences can be found in Labour Force Survey data on employment rates amongst women from different ethnic groups, which is discussed below.

Official data on employment rates of women from different ethnic groups (2001-2025)

Chart 1 shows employment rates amongst women from different ethnic groups in 2001 and in 2025, based on the Labour Force Survey.

Chart 1. Employment rates (%) for women aged 16-64 by ethnic group



Source: A09: Labour market status by ethnic group - Office for National Statistics

Chart 1 shows some dramatic shifts in engagement by women from ethnic minority groups in the labour market. Key points include:

- There remains a gap in employment rates between white and non-white women, but the gap has halved in the last 25 years
- Employment rates vary markedly between different ethnic minority groups, with Indian women and black women tending to have the highest rates
- Although employment rates amongst Pakistani and (particularly) Bangladeshi women tend to be the lowest, both have risen sharply, with nearly half of all women in these

groups now in paid work

These changes were clearly reflected in the differences between older and younger women who took part in our research.

Other marked generational differences evident in our research included:

Some older women did not have property-owning parents from whom they expected to inherit, unlike many of their white British counterparts:

> *"The other thing we don't necessarily have [is] that generational wealth that we can depend on. Whereas maybe like, the English people, their grandparents, great grandparents ...there is inheritance being handed down. We are maybe the second or the third generation. So we're just kind of like building on that for our children, our grandchildren. So I think therefore our children do realise that, we've come from a disadvantaged background, therefore they need to stand on their own two feet." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

Family roles were changing. Older women may have married young and been brought up with the assumption that their role was to bring up their family. There was an expectation of an 'intergenerational contract' where older women would be supported in old age by their (adult) children. By contrast, almost without exception, younger women in our research dismissed the idea that they might, in turn, be supported in old age by their own children, but instead thought that they might have an ongoing responsibility for their children who may face a tough economic environment:

> *"The notion that we can depend on our children. I think culturally, it is changing with possibly our generation because I think my mum and dad, there is an expectation that they might be able to depend on me. Not fully, but to a degree, but I think things are so different. I think culturally our children are living in a different time, different ethics, different values. I don't think I can apply the same values to my children and I don't think I can be dependent on them because I think they'll be busy building their own future." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

> *"We are probably the first generation who don't look at it in that way. We don't want to burden our children, rather we want to help our children if we can." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]*

"I wouldn't want to rely on my children. ...it will be harder and harder probably for their generation. I would feel like a burden to them if I was relying on them." [African, 30-45 group]

Amongst younger women, there was much more expectation that they would have their own wage, rather than being at home with children. A wage was needed to support buying a house – as well as for single parents who were the sole potential breadwinners:

"I think things are ... probably shifting as generations go on and I think women are becoming more independent and they do want to take care of themselves so they will think about pensions more." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

"Now everybody is [a] graduate. So things have changed and people have become more flexible in terms of culture, rituals and religious boundaries. They have broken and women are more and more independent now." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

There was a feeling that historically, finances were not discussed in the home:

"If you do not come from an environment where wealth or money has been easily accessible or in plenty, as it were, you don't discuss it." [Caribbean, 45+ group]

"And yeah, I think there is a lack, not of learning, but there's a lack of literacy when it comes to money. How do you read money, how do you invest, how do you save it, how do you budget, how do you talk about it? Because people, my family, we never talked about money except on how to spend it, basically." [African, 45+ group]

"...I'm Bengali..., so coming from that kind of culture and stuff, I've noticed that a lot of the time we don't talk about, like, future savings. And I don't know if there's like a taboo or it's not kind of the norm. But a lot of the time, as women, we don't really speak about these kind of things." [Pakistani/Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

The younger respondents felt that they were less likely than their parents' generation to experience overt discrimination, whether in the labour market or by financial institutions such as banks:

"That was because also banks weren't lending money to families. Like the houses that my grandparents have bought came through the help of others. Although it was their money, it was pardners and things that helped them because the banks weren't trying to give them a mortgage or the banks weren't trying to let them set up whatever business it was." [Caribbean, 30-45 group]

"Well, I do feel like maybe in terms of our Caucasian counterparts in terms of where we are like financially wise and the job market or you know, hierarchies of management and stuff, I can only see that in these past couple of years now that's becoming more. But I feel like whereas before it wasn't. I feel like we were always in the kind of lower paying jobs. But I see now they're really starting to like push themselves and go like into corporate roles and NHS management and things like that. And I don't feel like that was the case before." [African, 30-45 group]

B. Gaps in knowledge, misconceptions and lack of trust

Many participants in the discussions acknowledged that they had quite low levels of understanding about even the basics of saving for later life, especially through a pension. There was, however, a difference between those who worked in the public and private sectors, with the former much more confident about their pension situation.

Areas where there was a lack of knowledge or trust included:

Confusion over what happened to workplace pensions when you changed jobs; participants wondered if the money was simply 'lost', or reverted to the employer:

> *"Pensions are very broad. I think the problem is getting with an employer is if you change employers, then what to do about the pension." [Pakistani, Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

> *"I think before when I was working with a different organisation. I was paying into a pension, but I left that company…. I don't know what's happened with it." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]*

They also didn't know what would happen to the money if they were to die before taking the pension or if they retired early:

> *"If we were to take it early, how much would they drop from us? If we took it later, would we get more? Is there any other pension we could pay into? Probably where we're gonna get better money back. If we were to die, where does the money go? Like, does it just get wiped out?" [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]*

> *"And everything that everybody else has said about what is it, can I withdraw it early, how much? If it's I think like the NHS one, I pay in a bit and they pay in a bit more. Like how much? What does that look like? Like what is the prediction of, you know, what is that going to look like weekly? What is the, what could happen if, if we lose it? All of those." [Caribbean, 30-45 group]*

> *"I just think we should be given more information about what actually happens… like, if I wasn't around, like what would actually happen to the money, does it get redistributed to the poor? Does it get given to my family? The contribution that the employers made, do I still get that? Or does my family want to receive the bit that I put in or did he get nothing? I'd like more information around that and if there's ways I can increase it or decrease it,*

that sort of stuff. If there's better pensions out there, you know, could I drop out of my work one and join that, that sort of stuff." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

A perception amongst some that anything to do with investing, with the possibility that your money can go down as well as up, is akin to gambling and hence best avoided; this led to a frequent desire for 'guarantees' that pension savings would not fall in value:

"... your pension could increase if you increase the risk... But I wouldn't want to take any risk even if it meant [a bigger pension]. It's a bit like gambling. I think you're investing in oil and then next week it falls down and your pension's less. I just rather not look." [Caribbean, 45+ group]

"Yeah, it's like the guaranteed income because, you know, pensions are like this with the interest rates and where they've been invested. You can say, well, look like you're saying, I think it's brilliant that if you invested £200, this is what you're getting. But if it was invested better, you could achieve this. But this is the bare minimum you'd get." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

There was very low awareness of the tax advantages of paying into a pension, though quite high awareness of the fact that pension withdrawals are taxable; this created a negative perception of the value of pension saving:

"I think the pension... it's going to be taxed as well... That's what I heard. I don't think it's a good way of saving when you come to think of that." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

"I feel like apparently [your pension] gets taxed or something, but I'm like, why is it getting taxed if it's your money? And I think stuff like that puts me off because what am I putting money in for if I'm not really gonna get it back?" [Caribbean, 30-45 group]

"But now you're thinking, well, if it's all gonna be taxed, what was the point of that? Because whatever you seem to do, whether it's in a pension or whether it's in your house or savings, they seem to be taxed again and again. And again, do you just think, is it actually worth it to do all of this?" [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

Although some respondents were positive about the 'app' offered by their workplace pension provider, there was a general feeling that written communications were hard to understand (especially for those for whom English is not a first language) and that it can be hard to obtain information:

"At my workplace they have these sessions every few months about pensions. But it just sounds so technical and it's just so hard to understand that I think it could just be simplified and could be explained a lot better in, in much simpler terms." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

Previous pension 'scandals', during which employees experienced losses to their pension funds, have contributed to a negative perception of pensions among some individuals; there is a desire for a scheme similar to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme for bank deposits to be applied to pensions:

"I just thought about all the people that put in Arcadia, when Topshop and BHS all collapsed and … that makes me feel like, okay, private companies [are] not safe for having the pensions in them." [African, 30-45 group]

"Some years ago…, the building societies collapsed and since then, the government brought in this 85K cap where if you lose up to that much, the government will, you know, return that back to you. So I think with these pensions companies, they should have some kind of system like that. ." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

"I personally wouldn't solely rely on a workplace pension because I know that obviously there is risk. I've never been all okay with risk and for me it's very much the money that I've put in is the money I want to see come out type of thing. So that's why I just pay my minimum contribution to [my] workplace pension and have been thinking about other things that I can do to kind of top that off." [Caribbean, 45+ group]

"I knew that the civil service put it somewhere, I just assumed into a big pot and that's why they were assuming loads of interest on it… But I didn't realise that they were investing it into all these companies and it comes with like low risk, medium risk and high risk…" [Indian / Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

Constant changes to pensions, notably with regard to state pension age and to pensions taxation, led to an erosion of trust, making it hard to know where you stand and look to other ways of saving:

"They change the legislation, they change the taxing code, they change this, they change that. So you need to have that plan B all the time because you need to know where you can like go from there. They're always coming out with new regulations and new, you know, we need this, we need that tax on this." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

"Pensions [are] forever changing, no one knows what's happening. And so I think people are thinking, well, we can't rely on a state pension. We don't know if we're going to get that money. We don't know if we are going to get that lump sum. So let's try to look into other investments, whether it's through ISAs, whether it's through bonds, whether it's through properties." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

"But the problem I've got is the government keep moving their goalposts. So there was a time where we could happily retire... Now you're expected to work to like 76. So the disparity adding another 16 years. And if you're from a migrant background with high cholesterol and diabetes, you know it's not going to happen." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

Concerns over the lack of access to a pension compared with other forms of investing, such as rental property, which generated an immediate income stream:

"...at the end of the day it's taxable and I think you can only reach your pot age 55 or something like that. I think that's different in Australia, for example, where if you needed it for something, you could actually draw some money." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

"I think obviously with a property you can get the money quicker and you can enjoy it. I know it's probably a lot less and your employers are matching, but the benefit is that it's available to you when you need it." [Pakistani/Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

Concern over whether the pension product was 'Halal' (meaning 'permitted' under religious law); it was notable that this language was used more often than 'Sharia

compliant', which is language often used by pension providers in this context. This point was raised primarily by the Pakistani & Bangladeshi participants:

> *"What I tend to struggle with in terms of investment, and this is one of the reasons why I've never gone down that route because I don't really understand, like, because obviously we have the halal way of investing and the non halal way and all the companies are complicit... in a lot of things that doesn't go with my beliefs. And for those reasons, I would never go to these companies or even, you know, the banks... It conflicts with my religion. Not just halal and haram, but in terms of like what these investment companies support. So I don't know who to go to, if I'm honest." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

> *"We don't have enough knowledge or education about it. We're not talking about in school or college or uni, you know, about how to invest or how to save or how the best way to save, what to invest in, you know, where you get returns. What's halal? What's haram?" [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]*

But this lack of knowledge and understanding was by no means universal. Positive aspects of pensions, of which some participants were aware, included:

You get money from your employer:

> *"And they said that if you pay a small amount, you get a lot, that the company will pay quite a lot. And so when they said that, that's when I started thinking, oh, actually, that's actually really good. And I think that's when I delved further into it and that's when I started thinking about, oh, actually, you know, this is something that I need to do. This is important. This is something I need to think about, I need to plan for." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

> *"So my employer pays like a percentage and I pay [a] percentage. So I did up my percentage. So then the employer. So the employees pay double, if that makes sense. So I pay, I think like 5, I think I pay like 5 or 6% and then they pay like 10 or 11%. So just upped that." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]*

You have an independent income separate from your partner:

“I have my partner, but I feel like I should still think independently.” [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

“So even if someone did come up to me and my children or my husband or whoever says, you know, I'll take care of you from this age, you know, don't worry about anything, I don't think I could let that be because I've just been raised to be an independent person. Women have more opportunities now. I don't think I can let that slide. I still want an income for myself. I still want a backup plan for myself as well.” [Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

C. Desire for accessible information about pensions and saving

Although there was a considerable lack of knowledge about pensions and, in some cases, a lack of trust, this did not indicate a lack of interest. Indeed, a consistent theme across all of the focus groups was a desire for more information about how the system worked. This was particularly notable amongst those who worked in the private sector who had been automatically enrolled into a workplace pension but knew little about it.

Participants obtained information from a range of sources:

Martin Lewis was mentioned repeatedly, and was seen as an impartial and trusted source of information with a track record of helping people:

> *"I'm looking [to] obviously independent people who are not financially motivated but knowledgeable. So obviously like Martin Lewis is unbiased and he's not seeking to gain a benefit for himself personally. So that's why you would trust him". [Indian/Sri Lankan, 45+ group]*

> *"I do not trust the government, but I trust Martin Lewis….. Because his advice is so true." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

> *"In my opinion, no. Martin Lewis is the only person's advice I'd probably take. Again you say influencers but they get paid to push content so I don't know if I'd trust that." [Caribbean, 30-45]*

Individual respondents had found helpful information on social media or books on personal finance; a minority had financial advisers, but there were mixed views as to whether they were providing truly 'independent' advice:

> *"I only know all this [about investment] because in the last couple of years I actually bought this book by a Sikh girl called "Girls that Invest". And literally, it's just like bullet points, everything. And I've taught myself how to invest from this book. [Indian/Sri Lankan, 45+ group]*

> *"I think TikTok has shown me a lot of things recently about pensions and, like, invested in pensions… If it hadn't been for that video that I just happened to see on TikTok, I don't know if that's necessarily something that I would have thought about. [Caribbean 30-45,*

group]

"I went straight onto YouTube...even just the 16 minute thing, I listened to, I thought, gosh, where does this guy get all this wisdom from? So I'm sending the links to my daughters again, saying, you must watch this...I thought someone gave me a million pounds. That's how that session felt" [African 45+, group]

"For me I'd want it presented in places that I'm already looking in small bite-sized pieces... I live on TikTok, so yeah, sneak it into me there. Small bite-sized pieces, one minute videos that can lead to more if I've got, you know, the energy to look at videos that are more than one minute or something to read but, you know, put it in places where I'm already looking. Not that I've got to do extra bits look for it". [Caribbean 30-45, group]

"You might go to financial advisors. I would feel a bit more wary of getting the information from there because they might be trying to plug something." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

"I've consulted Muslim financial planners .. so even when we're doing our will now, he was like, well, you should have this, you should have this in place. You should have life insurance in place. So because he was Muslim, is life insurance halal? How can I do this? Will this align with my views? Am I doing the right, correct thing? And he's been able to advise me on both sides. And that's why I think that's been really important for me.....Or even someone who doesn't have to be from your religion. Someone who understands what my values are and what I will and what I can and can't do. [Telling me] 'that would not be acceptable for me'. Or this, I can, I can go down this route and this is what would work for me. "[Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+]

Many obtained information about financial matters from other family members (in some cases, their own teenage children). Interestingly, it was either starting a family or seeing their parents retiring that often caused respondents to think more about their own financial futures:

"I would say I've definitely seen a sharp improvement over the last 10 years. I think, like, the younger generation are definitely breaking that cycle and trying to, like, put their parents on or informing their parents or, you know, letting their parents know about pensions, about workplace benefits." [African, 30-45 group]

"I think my parents are kind of like my role model in that sense. Because I think their whole life, they've worked really, really hard and it's for them to obviously be financially stable. And now that my dad's obviously going to retire soon, I think I've seen the benefit of him doing that and even, you know, having his pension, having his savings because now I feel like he's able to enjoy life a lot, but also he's able to kind of give back to us as kids as well. And I think that's kind of given me a bit of a reality check as well now that I become a mom. Because obviously in my head I'm not just thinking for myself, I'm thinking, thinking about what I can do for my child and what I can leave behind. So I think for me, I would definitely say my parents are kind of the people that have shaped it for me. "[Pakistani, Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

Some reported that their workplace offered sessions on pensions, but said they needed to be more tailored:

"Now another thing is that those people who attend those sessions on pensions, they're a mixed audience. Some are very financially literate and some, some are clueless. So I think they need to have beginner's sessions. The fundamentals, the basics for people who know nothing. And then they can have more, you know, more sophisticated sessions for people who are clued up. [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

"A good thing my previous employer had [sessions] tailored to age groups. So you had your 20 plus, then you had your 40 plus and you had 60 getting to retirement. And then they did recorded sessions so people who didn't attend could go back and watch them as well..... And the pension provider were the ones who did the sessions. And then as part of your onboarding, they would show you how to use the app and go through sort of [things like] "your pension could increase if you increase the risk" [Caribbean 45+, group]

Some reported hearing talks on money matters in religious settings, and there was some appetite to learn from scholars about money issues; but it was thought unlikely that local faith leaders would necessarily have the expertise to help people navigate financial matters:

"I'm part of a local Hindu community and within the temple they had a special talk from a bank manager just to explain, what a pension scheme is. How much you should be contributing, what the advantages of investing in that and I thought it was quite a good

initiative. It was mostly targeted for the sort of over 60s and a lot of people actually turned up and it just gave that awareness to them". [Indian/Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

"Someone went to the teenage church within my church and there was this person talking about [finances]. And they advertise it to everybody, adults, their parents, who join this thing online. It's probably the best financial session I've ever attended in my entire life. He was saying things I never heard in my life. And so, so obviously my daughter now she's all into all this saving business, all this kind of stuff from church" [African 45+, group]

Pension company apps were generally seen as useful, as well as other money management apps:

"The app is quite user friendly. Yeah, wish I just started earlier…. because I log into the app, I can sort of see if it's doing well. There's a little graph. So it is quite like user friendly". [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

Several (younger) respondents said that they sought information from AI tools such as Chat GPT:

"I really like Chat GPT. I'm gonna put it out there. I know it's not perfect, but I find it quite good to find the basics of things, I guess, and, you know, bullet point, some options, and then I can go myself and look for, like, I guess, answers. You know, what are my options for investments? Is my workplace pension the best option, that kind of thing? I like to do a little bit of research and dabble and then go off and start looking for what I deem is, like, suitable for. For me or for my family. And it's very black and white. So I find it gives me the basics that I need." [African, 30-45 group]

Things that people would have liked to know more about included:

Where do my contributions actually go?

"With regards to pension and retirement, I have no hope. I don't know what the future looks like. It's a lot of anxiety. I don't know where my employer contributions go. So a lot of uncertainty."[Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

How much will I get when I retire?

"We are paying into our pensions. But .. I really don't understand the projection of when you retire, how much I'm gonna get". [Indian/Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

"[I would prefer it if] they just said this much per month. If you're 40 and you put in 50 quid a month and this is what you're going to get after 20 years or 30 years. I'm not going to hunt around.. [so don't] make me fill in thousands of forms. I just go directly with them. It's what I can afford" [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

How much do I need?

"What money are you going to get automatically? Your government pension, like how much you need to live, how much you need a minimum amount that you need a week to survive, to be comfortable." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+]

"I think I would like to have like a chart of like, okay, if you pay £200 a month for the next 30 years.... When you're 70, you're going to be getting so and so a month. And you will, you know, you will live comfortably then with that. If you pay £100 a month now for the next 30 years, you will be, you know, you do it, you do a contrast £200 a month, this is how you'll be living. And £100 a month, this is how you'll be living."[Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+]

How does inflation figure in the projections – won't prices be higher when I retire?

"I think the shortcoming on some of those things, like your Pension Bee and like that is it gives you a forecast based on what you're paying in and it's up to you the level of risk in terms of where you want to invest. If you want to go to the point of looking at if a company's ethical and you want to follow it, or what it doesn't do is tell you when you're 67, what the cost of living is going to look like then versus what your pension is going to be. So, you think, oh, actually I'll be well off. I'll be having two, three grand a month coming in. It doesn't tell you that bread will be £10. So you don't. You're judging that money on how you are now, not potentially what it could look like then." [Caribbean, 45+ group]

"From my experience 10 years ago, £25, £30 weekly shop would have enough for me and my husband. Now if I go into the supermarket for milk, I come out with £40 of shopping and there's just four or five stuff. So 10 years, 20 years down the line, whatever the projection I'm having at the moment that I will get this much Will that be enough? "[Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

How do I access the money? Does the company just 'contact you when you retire'?

"I'll be honest with you, I actually don't know. My assumption is that you get to retirement age and the company gets in touch with you and goes, okay, this is what you're going to get. Get each month. Where do you want it to go? But that's just an assumption. I've not got a clue at all." [Caribbean, 30-45 group]

Despite this, respondents indicated a number of barriers in obtaining information. Key points included:

A lack of information presented by people who are 'like them'; there was a desire for education and information from *within* different ethnic communities:

"Okay, so me, I would say anybody who has, who has good knowledge of financial information, like accountants or a lawyer or someone like that, I'm sure for certain, like, I'm thinking of some of my children's friends, parents who are like first, you know, children are the first gens here. I would say for them probably would be someone who looks like them but has the kind of information, you know, where they feel comfortable, they know it's not something different", [Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

"Yeah, it needs to be different... community, languages and people that look similar to us to explain, you know, what the benefits are. The pros are why we do it. What's the reasoning behind it. .... You've also got GP surgeries and medical practices where you have you know, dentists, all of that utilise them opportunities. It's really important to engage our community in our own languages." [Indian / Sri Lankan 30-45 group]

"I think in my community, Shay, I think I might mention it, there must be, the communities are so big, must be somebody who's pension literate, you know, to say, look, can you do a session for us? You know, I don't understand this. Can you offer this session? Because I'm sure I'm not the only one who doesn't understand. There must be a lot more people within the community who doesn't understand but are shy to speak up."[African,

45+ group]

"I also believe that. Well, I get like this. But if that's the stats, if they really want the information to be passed down, have more black females than in the organisations that they're, you know, because that's, that's how things happen. You want to make change, but you may have a team that has no representation of the people that you want to reach out to. And that's why I feel that that's something that's a quite, quite important. You have to have the right team in order to educate, in order to help support. If that's the, if that's the clientele that you also want to reach as." [Caribbean, 45+ group]

It was hard to know where to find information, and there was considerable support for information in one place, such as a Government 'app', similar to the existing NHS app; information needed to be in places where people were already looking, rather than having to track it down:

"Unless you go looking for it, it's not put in your face. Like, we weren't educated in school about finances in general. So when it comes to retirement, pensions, things like that, unless you go looking for it, I have no clue". [Caribbean 30-45, group]

"I do think an app out of the pension provider, but maybe the same app that is used across the board. So I don't know if it would be like government led, but I just guess something that is consistent so you could put in, you know, if I up my pension by 1% on this wage, how much less do I come home with like, you know, balancing off your tax and your circumstances, but also then to see where you're at with the end of it. But I think it would need to be something that was used across the board for it for the information to be right all the time. Because even half a percent would make a massive difference over 10, 15, 20 years." [African 30-45, group]

"I would like an app like with the information. I want to see the projections, I want to see how much I've contributed so far. I want to play with the numbers and change. If I do 5%, do 10%, I want to see the other options available. I just want the information available for me to play around with." [African 30-45, group]

"A government app would be good... Because obviously you want to reach different communities, you want to reach everyone, the old, the young, you know, so maybe like the NHS [app]. Like, you know how sometimes like NHS would do on, like maybe

smoking cessation or, you know, money, finance? Maybe if they had something there that would reach out to more people." [African 30-45, group]

A lack of engagement because of the way in which automatic enrolment relies on defaults / inertia:

"Well, me personally, I feel there's very little information out there in terms of workplace. I've personally never been in a workplace where they've had a lot of information about the pension. It is just when you're filling out all the forms and they say 'would you like to join the pension?'. And you tick yes or you tick no. And then that's very much it and you get some paperwork." [Caribbean 45+ group]

"Usually when you start the job, they just send you some paper form for you to fill … sometimes we don't even know how much we contribute, what it really means to contribute? …I just feel like it's just some document that you have to sign when you join a new workplace. And that's it." [African 30-45 group]

Pension providers did not always communicate in plain English or in digestible 'chunks'; it was felt that there were sometimes barriers to obtaining information, in particular difficulties in speaking to someone directly (which is likely to be more problematic for those for whom English is not their first language):

"So when he was actually getting his obviously, you know, money from his pension…, first of all, it was really hard because we couldn't even. There was like, you had to contact them by, like email and stuff. So it wasn't like anyone that you could just speak to directly. So that was like a barrier there. Like, you know, because obviously we prefer just ringing and speaking to someone." [Pakistani/Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

"The word pension sounds a bit stuffy to me… If I said to my 19 year old or my 17 year old daughter 'let's think about pensions', I mean, I don't even know enough. So the whole concept needs to be made fun." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

"But I just want to add that the use of easy-to-understand language, if we are targeting our community or community whose English is second language. I mean sometimes the language is so twisted. It's very hard to understand what they really want to say. Just

easy words, easy, simple language so that, you know, it's not just our community. There are so many other communities whose, you know, English is a second language. So yes, this makes things easier." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

"Just get to the point, stop dancing around the subjects and throwing numbers and percentages and that there is a risk of if they do make it too light-hearted, people won't take it serious, and it is a serious matter." [Caribbean, 30-45 group]

"Some of the words are scary, some of the words are like completely foreign. And there's also sometimes an underlying threat. If you don't do this now, you'll be doomed and it'll be like, it's not too late, you can start somewhere and it's better to start now. I think that's where I would say make it a lot more simple and accessible and don't make it sound like a threat, but as in it's not too late, you can still get somewhere if you start now kind of thing." [African, 45+ group]

For younger generations, traditional media outlets such as TV, radio and print media were increasingly unlikely to reach them:

"Offer me a service. So if there is information out there from charities, like step-by-step guides, bite size videos, that kind of thing, I could like educate myself and then become more knowledgeable to be able to make that decision as to whether I get a pension, which one and how I can manage it." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

"I like a more video based. So where ... they can show you the information on the screen, you say, okay, if you're earning say £25,000, this is what it looks like, this is what your take home pay could look like. And add those little things if you've got a student loan or those types of things, that's something visual. And I can take time and I can do my own calculations and say actually it's not too scary as such .... Certain things would work for me." [African 30-45, group]

"But the problem is people are watching TV less and less. You need to be on Netflix. You need influencers instantly. TikTok. That's where it has to be because like my kids do not watch any TV. It's been Netflix. TikTok, Insta. They don't watch TV... It's a shift of where you need to be advertising, really." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

"Be useful to even like you said, you said something about sharing about on TV and stuff like that. But think about the younger generation who might not be watching TV, so maybe like more social media and stuff like that because that's really where people are getting their information from nowadays, like on Tik Tok and Instagram and things like that.""[Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

There was a lack of a 'trigger' to focus attention on pensions and financial planning. The analogy was given of health screening, which happens at set points in life, and a government-initiated 'nudge' to focus on finances might be welcomed:

"The government has a role to play, though. A bit like, you know, I've just had a check come through to go for bowel cancer.... Government should... have that check... it may be when people are older, then they'll be less reliant on things like winter fuel allowance and all that sort of stuff." [Caribbean, 45+]

A recurrent theme was the view that better financial education in schools would have helped and would have been of more practical use than many things on the curriculum:

"I think it should be embedded in the curriculum. To be honest, I've never used Pythagoras theory since I did maths GCSE... I can tell you about the different triangles, but I don't know my own money in the way... we're not getting that, that education about making our money work for us." [Caribbean 30-45, group]

"I didn't grow up with the knowledge of anything. So it's just been self-taught. You make a mistake, you learn from it. That needs to change. Financial education needs to be in all schools from a very, very early stage." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

D. Diverse range of ways of providing for later life finances

Across the different focus groups, workplace pensions were rarely seen as the only way of providing financially for later life (with the major exception of those in public sector Defined Benefit schemes), and a wide range of other strategies was described to supplement or even replace pension savings.

Examples included:

Being a landlord, though noting that this was less attractive now because of recent tax changes, was seen as more secure and also a way of providing accessible income. This was a particular theme amongst the Asian respondents:

> *"The next kind of goal that I have is investing in another property just so I can rent and make some money off it... trying to use money and then trying to get more from using that... So just investing really like your money rather than just having it in a savings pot where it's not doing anything for you.... It's quicker money, isn't it? Because with a pension, obviously you've got to wait...obviously when you're 55, you can take it out." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi 30-45 group]*

> *"With the Asians, generally, we like to invest in houses... People used to buy properties and rent them out and that was a huge business. But that seems to have kind of like dissolved now because of the new laws." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

> *"And then again, like, you know, investing in houses and things like that was a really good option until all the laws changed. It actually isn't worth having another property now with the amount of tax you've got to pay." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 45+ group]*

> *"Pensions was not even on our list because I come from Sri Lanka and there everybody usually own businesses, mostly, there are people who actually go to work and stuff like that. So probably in those kind of families you would hear of pensions and stuff, especially in the civil services back home as well. Whereas, like the family I grew up in, it was about investing in property savings, probably shares things like that. So they had that income coming in. Even today my mom, she lives off property income, whereas me coming to the UK, it's completely different." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]*

Gold – seen as a safe haven, and something which the older generation had relied on. Again, a particular theme amongst the Asian respondents:

"When I look at my parents and their values, they came with the mindset to work really hard and save their pennies, but actually invest in gold." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

"Gold bars is the way forward." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

Investing via apps / online platforms:

"From stocks and shares, compounded interest, I can get around 8% a year, whereas, you know, in a savings account, even at the top, whack, 3…I used to think that the gold standard was having this pension and then my mindset shifted in the last five, 10 years to say, no, there's all these other things that I am actually putting my money into instead because it's that compound effect and I'm getting more." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

"People do stocks and stuff or challenges on their apps where they take some money and it adds up or [use] the change or something [for] investing in stocks and stuff, which also like add little money here and there. There's all these little things that you can do to add money here and there." [African 30-45, group]

"I signed up to Moneybox and every Monday £20 comes up from my account and it locks up for a Lifetime ISA thing. I felt, well, if it's just £20, I don't feel it that much because it's, it's going somewhere which I purposely decided …. I can't touch for a number of years. So that builds up interest and that could be another form of a pension, but not really a pension." [African 30-45, group]

Investing outside the UK (often in a 'home' country where family still live), possibly with a view to retiring outside the UK:

"I'm looking into investing in the stock market in my home country because the economy is doing quite well at the moment and there is a bit of an incline." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

"I most probably won't retire in the UK, but I want to retire. I still probably will work, but I just [don't] want to be like these aunties who are just working, working, just trying to probably finish paying off their mortgage." [African 30-45, group]

Savings accounts, including Christmas clubs, ISAs and Lifetime ISAs:

"I've recently just started doing the Christmas savers. I did it for the first time last year and I wasn't too sure about it. So I only did about 30 pounds a month, but when it came to Christmas, just the freedom that it gave me, I was like, this is such an amazing feeling. So now I'm continuing it. Whenever I go for a food shop, I pick up a ten-pound voucher and put that to one side. So come Christmas, my food shop sorted and it just feels, it's like a weight lifted off my shoulders. [Caribbean 30-45, group]

"Okay, so I have an ISA as well. And then apart from that, two saving pots through the bank with a higher interest rate which I found like about a year ago. Yeah, they don't really advertise it that much probably because the interest rate is high." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

Hoping for an inheritance, especially those with elderly parents:

"I think a lot of people are relying on an inheritance, you know, whenever that…becomes available." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

"For me personally, I mean, I will inherit, you know, from my parents, but I've always lived my life as if I wouldn't because I don't take things for granted." [Indian/Sri Lankan, 45+ group]

Running a business, including 'side-hustles' as well as more traditional businesses:

"I'm starting a business on the side." [African 45+, group]

"When our parents came in the 60s and 70s, they had nothing. So … we grew up with nothing. So they built and built and my dad bought a business and they worked seven

days a week... and they really wanted to educate their children, so they'd have a different future." [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]

For homeowners, freeing up money at retirement by downsizing:

"I've got to the point where I just think, you know, what will be, will be. I've got my house. If I need to downsize and get a bit more money from that, then so be it". [Caribbean 45+, group]

Community-based savings schemes:

A concept which came up in a number of groups, though with slightly different names, was the idea of a community-based 'Pardner' saving scheme. According to the Bank of England website[6], such schemes were common amongst migrants to the UK from the Caribbean, but were also mentioned by other groups in our research.

These are schemes more generally described as a "Rotating Savings and Credit Association", where a group of individuals who trust each other come together to make regular savings and then periodically have access to the entire collective saving fund. The establishment of such schemes in the UK may have reflected problems in accessing traditional bank finance, but also a cultural value that money is a shared resource rather than a purely private property. Participants observed that such schemes are now becoming less common, perhaps as later generations have gradually adopted a more individualistic approach to money.

"There's that level of psychological safety that people feel around their peers. We recognise that when [another participant] first mentioned the "Pardner", everyone started smiling and laughing because guess what, that's what we basically recognise. [Caribbean 45+, group]

"Sometimes you used to get a good amount of money in these pardners, and you think of the level of trust you must have had in these people that you would be handing over your money to every week". [Caribbean 45+, group]

"It's more of like, what can we do to kind of like get money in our community? .., they have a thing called, we call it, it's like a pardner. So basically they put money every

[6] Pardner Hand: A Caribbean answer to British banking exclusion | Bank of England

month from when they get paid, it comes up to a lump sum of like a grand, maybe like say the end of the year and it's given to one person. So pension is not really a thing. I think it's more of like a generational thing where you think the next person's going to look after you or, you know, my children are going to provide financially, which I don't always think is a good idea". [African 30-45 group]

E. Hopes and dreams for later life – but are pensions seen as the answer?

Many of our participants saw retirement as a positive phase of life. If things worked out well, they would be financially secure and could independently maintain their pre-retirement lifestyle into retirement. Ideally, many would like to retire early. The challenge for the pension industry will be to help people see pension saving as an integral part of fulfilling those aspirations.

> *"...that opportunity to chase my passion, to face something I really want to do" [African, 45+ group]*

> *"... less worry about the money and finance and all this stuff for me and for my family, of course... Or I just want to add or more likely to maintain the lifestyle which I have or maybe improve it" [Pakistani / Bangladeshi 30-45 group]*

> *"... to be able to be dependent on yourself rather than the government... just be able to independently financially support yourself ...because you don't know what the future's gonna hold. You might end up in a care home. You could have dementia... So independence is a big thing for me. [Pakistani / Bangladeshi 45+ group]*

But many were concerned that these dreams might not be fulfilled based on their current level of savings and knowledge. Some used words like 'fear', 'panic'(etc) when thinking about this phase of their life, and many recognised that they were not currently on course for the kind of retirement they would want (though others simply didn't know where they stood or what they might need). Several people were worried they might not live to retirement / knew people who had died early, and wanted to 'live for the moment'.

> *"My words would be terror, fear, panic. I know that a lot of people are living up to 100 now.... So I'm afraid of the future. [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

> *"It's like panicking. How am I going to live in the future? I. What do I need to do? It's honestly it. Because before I didn't think about that at all or two years ago I wouldn't be thinking about it. But now it's scary. It's literally so scary. Everything costs so much. [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+ group]*

"For me it's like panic because I'm getting older and there was no pension scheme [in my previous roles]. Then it [automatic enrolment] came into play, obviously, about 10 years ago. So for me, my pension pot will be really small…. I enjoy my life now because obviously I want to live life and enjoy it. So I don't think about the money in the future that much. That's why it's a bit panicky". [African, 45+ group]

The challenges of building up a decent retirement fund, including the 'cost of living crisis', were often mentioned, and some respondents said that they were under pressure to 'send money back' to family overseas or that the cultural expectation was that they would continue to support adult children , which further limited their scope for personal saving.

"I have older kids and they're expensive. At the end of - not even the end of the month - third week, I rely on my credit card, then try and pay that off because I don't want to accrue interest. I feel like I'm constantly, like a month, two months behind. So just trying to juggle that. So I couldn't afford to put more in. If I put more in, then obviously my employers would put more in as well. So that's the only thing restricting me from doing that now". [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 30-45 group]

"Sometimes it's just not possible. The money's just not there. It has to go on other things, like, heating the house, lighting the house, paying rent so that you still got a roof over your head. At the end of it you just go, I just haven't got it there to save". [Caribbean 30-45, group]

"It's just you have a limited amount, yes, your salary rises, but not in comparison with the cost of living. And putting money away, especially when you have kids, is because, especially in ethnic minority communities, your responsibility especially doesn't end at 18. If it's a girl till she's given in marriage and son till he's, you know, independent and living on his own. It's, it goes on. Whether it's 25, 30 years, they're still sometimes in the house. So it makes it a bit more difficult." [Indian / Sri Lankan, 30-45 group]

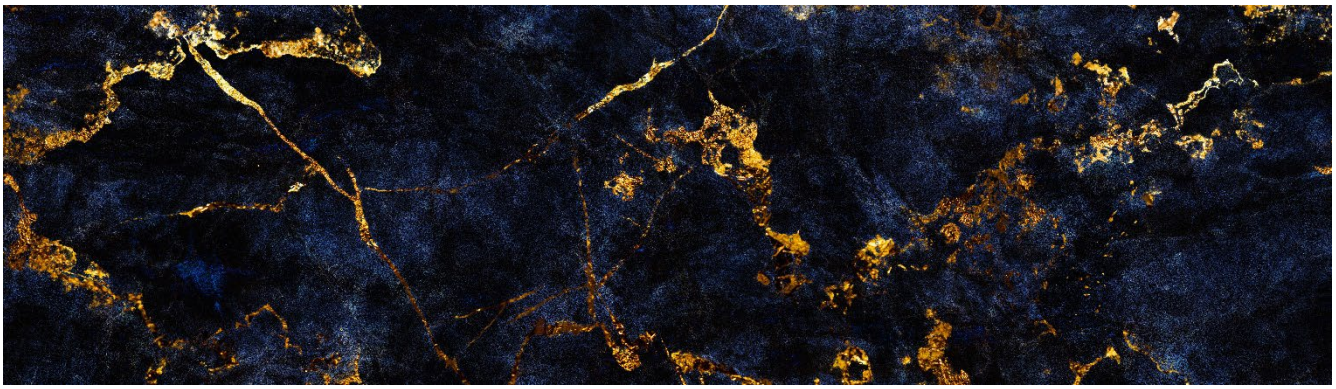
Suggestions on how to improve pension communication and understanding for their ethnic group

"You need to work with a range of different stakeholders. You need a very savvy person from the West Indian community, someone who actually understands and knows wealth.

So what's the name of that lovely family that do some really amazing thing, the Forbes family. So him and his family, you know, they're absolutely financially savvy. But then you need to work with people like me that actually don't get it, because I'm going to look at whatever's being designed and built differently to what Mr. Forbes and everyone in between is actually gonna look. So I can't tell you what looks good. All I do know is that there needs to be more education within the community." [Caribbean, 45+ Group]

"It would be nice if they rolled out a campaign about pension. You need to think about it seriously. And then put leaflets, you know, all the places that we go. The GPs I go to, I work and go to church... let's start locally first and then grow from there. And then I'm not a very online person, I don't have social media presence at all. I still listen to a commercial on the radio or something on TV and things like that. And I would say for the younger generation, maybe spread something on social media about it. Having people that they know, that have like a huge presence online that can actually talk about it. It should be started as early as possible for kids and then you take it from there. And I would say for specifically people my age, definitely. It would be nice to have .. a dedicated website and you can ask all of your questions, maybe a chat that you can interact with and ask your questions. And if it's too much, maybe someone can call you and then inform you more specifically about your personal needs and things. I think a lot of people care, but they just don't know how to get about it." [African, 45+]

"So the mosques are doing so all the new age mosques that deal with, you know, people born and bred in this country because like my kids only speak English, they don't speak another language. So they've developed that quite a lot, all of these mosques and they've done a lot on wills, financial planning, where to go, who to say speak to. They've done talks on it, because they know that going forward, this is what all our children need. My kids are at that age now. My daughter's just graduated, she'd be looking at getting a job, pensions, all that kind of thing. So it's important for her. So that's where I think would be maybe if someone was going to do something, partner up with mosques, partner up with people like that, partner with people that can support them. That's where I, that's where I would go and that's where I'd find out what was right and wrong for me. [Pakistani / Bangladeshi, 45+]



04 Implications of the research

When researching issues around women from ethnic minorities, it might have been expected that the conclusions would be largely negative. But the three partners who have funded this research have emerged, if anything, more optimistic about the prospects for tackling some of these pension gaps.

This is for two main reasons:

- **The younger generations of women in the different groups were generally more likely to be in paid work and more likely to have higher levels of formal education.** Both of these factors have the potential to improve pension outcomes compared with previous generations. While this may well be an improvement that we see for women irrespective of ethnicity, it is particularly significant for the women in the ethnic minority groups that we are considering, as cultural and traditional beliefs around the woman's role as financially dependent appear to have persisted for longer, especially where new to the UK. This shift is therefore particularly significant in these groups.
- **Although there are a widespread lack of knowledge and a certain lack of trust in pensions, there is also considerable hunger for information and explanation.** Almost without exception, participants would have welcomed financial education whilst at school, but many also said that they would access information about pensions and personal finances, provided it was easy to find, presented in straightforward language, and by people they trusted and could identify with. Again, while these barriers are likely to impact women across all ethnicities, there are particular challenges around orchestrating the delivery of the messages to women of ethnic minorities by people they can easily identify with. There will also be a greater concentration in this group of women for whom English is not their first language, and where simplicity of language is not merely desirable, but crucial.

In surveying women from ethnic minority groups, we found certain common themes, but we also found themes that were especially pertinent to particular groups.

For example, it was the women in the Asian groups who were most concerned about whether investing was consistent with their religious beliefs, and also this group, amongst whose families, being a landlord seemed especially common. Women of Caribbean heritage were more familiar with community-based ‘pardner’ saving schemes and reported some challenges accessing traditional financial services, particularly in years gone by. These findings, and others, are a reminder to financial services providers and the pensions industry of the importance of understanding the diversity of their membership and tailoring their approach accordingly.

But it is clear that the pensions industry has a considerable opportunity to support these women in achieving better pension outcomes than in the past, and thereby to help reduce both the ‘gender’ pension gap and the ‘ethnicity’ pension gap, which have been such persistent features of the pensions landscape.

05 Lessons for providers, trustees and those who advise them

Key messages, for consideration by trustees, providers and those who advise them, include:

- **The need for a diversity of ways of communicating about pensions. This includes:**
  - Understand that your membership is diverse and that what works for one member may not work for another; this suggests using a range of formats / channels, noting particularly the reliance of younger people on social media
  - Using a range of voices, including trusted third parties such as spokespeople within different communities.
  - Ensuring that official sources such as Pension Wise communicate in a way that reflects the increasing diversity of DC pension savers
  - Tailoring communications for different points in people's lives
  - Recognising that English will not be the first language of some, and being especially careful about pensions jargon
- **Not assuming that people even understand the basics. This includes:**
  - Just because someone has been told something once, perhaps at a time when they were starting a new job and were focused on other things, do not assume that it has sunk in
  - Make sure all communications reiterate the key points in a clear and jargon-free way

- **The need for information to be ‘where people are’ already, rather than having to go and hunt it down**
  - Removing as many barriers as possible for those who want to obtain information
  - Finding out more about where members are going for their information about pensions, and forming partnerships
  - Engage with national pension awareness campaigns and promote to members with clear signposting about how they can get the information they need.
  - Exploring the potential for community-based engagement in settings such as faith-based centres (Mosques, Temples, Churches, etc.) or other community settings (such as schools, community centres, social clubs)
  - Trustees should collaborate with employers to establish the most effective way of delivering key information, and encourage employers to see the value in educating and informing their workforce about pensions
  - Start the process by delivering more financial education – including an introduction to pensions – within the school system

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