



**First Minister's National Advisory  
Council on Women and Girls**

Website Summary  
May-June 2019 Spotlight: Older Women

---

**MAKE YOUR  
VOICE HEARD**

---

**#GENERATION  
EQUAL**



## YOU SAID – WE LISTENED

---

In May and June 2019 we invited public feedback on the Spotlight topic of older women. We'd like to give a huge thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and ideas.

A full report has been given to the NACWG and a summary version is shared below.

**Please note: these reports summarise the responses received to this open call for submissions. They do not represent the views of the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (we are seeking feedback to gain more insight) nor do they represent a majority view or the view of the Scottish population. They represent the views of those organisations or individuals who have chosen, proactively, to respond.**

### Who did we hear from?

We had a great response and heard from both individuals and 'Wee Circle' discussions.

We heard from a range of genders, sexual orientations, ethnicities, religions, ages, as well as from people with a disability.

### WE ASKED THREE QUESTIONS:

- Q1** IN SCOTLAND, WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST EQUALITY ISSUES AROUND HEALTH, FOR OLDER WOMEN?
- Q2** IN SCOTLAND, WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE TO IMPROVE EQUALITY FOR OLDER WOMEN?
- Q3** WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD NACWG RECOMMEND TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUALITY FOR OLDER WOMEN?



# #GENERATIONEQUAL

3 / 12

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Changes made to the state pension age and the impact on women born in the 1950s was a major theme. But this was inextricably linked to other gender equality issues including: employment opportunities, care responsibilities and the good health required if women are expected to work into their late 60s (and potentially older in future).

There was an overarching theme around valuing older women. Both in terms of recognising and valuing the contributions made and experience gained over their lives to date (and the impact of gender inequality during this time), and recognising and valuing the contributions women can continue to make to society – today and in the future – as they get older.

Feedback was grouped under 7 main themes as summarised below.



# MAIN ISSUES



## 1.

# PENSION AGE/WASPI WOMEN

---

Many responses highlighted the impact of changes to the UK state pension age, particularly for women born in the 1950s (a group often referred to as WASPI, Women Against State Pension Increase). Feedback highlighted how gender inequality since the 1950s had curtailed their employment opportunities, earnings, and National Insurance contributions, meaning they are disproportionately disadvantaged by changes to the state pension age. Feedback highlighted how multiple barriers make it difficult for women to meet the requirement of working up to state pension age, including: lack of suitable employment; workplace discrimination; health problems; and care responsibilities (often for younger and older family, as well as partners).

Responses acknowledged that Scotland does not have devolved powers over pensions but outlined a range of ways that inequitable financial hardship might be reduced.



## 2.

# FINANCES MORE GENERALLY

---

Feedback included calls for fairer financial recognition of caring responsibilities. This included points around the current level of Carer's Allowance and gender equality issues around the home.

Respondents suggested potential actions around introducing a Universal Basic Income, changes to a number of welfare benefits, and improving women's access to financial planning advice throughout life.



## 3. EMPLOYMENT

---

People shared experiences of being undervalued, marginalised and 'managed-out' of work as they got older. Ageism was also raised as a barrier to women re-entering the workplace after time out, which is often caring-related. Ageism was also highlighted as a barrier to women changing jobs, or finding work which is less physically demanding as they become older. Few workplaces were felt to have policies and practices that support women through the menopause. Feedback also highlighted a lack of opportunities and support for women to retrain.

The actions people suggested largely mirrored the points above and focused on changing employer and workplace practices, addressing ageism, and increasing accessible opportunities for women to retrain or acquire new skills.



## 4. HEALTH

---

The need for good physical and mental health support was raised in the context of women being expected to work until later in life. Other feedback echoed the NACWG's previous Spotlight on Health [\(you can find the Health Spotlight summary here\)](#), with some people feeling women's health problems and pain can be dismissed. Feedback also highlighted concerns about the sex and gender of health professionals, particularly in the context of older women's intimate care needs.

Feedback on possible actions included: better research and understanding; improved training for practitioners; free dental care; free swimming; making it easier for women to request biologically female healthcare workers; and increased awareness of the menopause.



## 5. CARING

---

Caring was a recurring theme in the feedback, closely linked to issues around pensions, employment and older women's physical and mental health. Feedback highlighted how women were historically, (and continue to be) expected to provide care for older and younger family members, which can result in women leaving employment. Responses also noted how women may be more likely to end up in care homes. Several people raised concerns that women do not have access to Carer's Allowance once they reach pension age, despite continued caring duties.

Suggested actions included: giving greater recognition and value to the unpaid care provided by older women, including fair financial recognition and support; and gaining a better understanding of women's experiences in care homes.



## 6. ENVIRONMENT (SERVICES, TRANSPORT, HOUSING, SAFETY, ISOLATION)

---

A range of environmental issues were raised, with many of these linked to the problem of older women finding themselves isolated and lonely.

Respondents highlighted a number of areas with scope for improvement including: public transport links (especially in rural areas); provision of public toilets; single sex spaces (e.g. hospital wards); exploring the use of rent caps and greater provision of single person housing for older people; giving older women intergenerational contact; and improved access to affordable exercise opportunities. Feedback included suggestions around better understanding of older BAME women and their service and support needs, as well as reflecting this in the way services are designed and provided.



## 7.

# CULTURE AND ATTITUDES

---

Feedback included a feeling that older women (and their skills and experience) are undervalued by society. Specific issues were raised in relation to: older women being framed as a 'drain' on the NHS; overemphasis on women's appearance; sexism and harassment continuing into later life; a lack of representation in positions of influence; and harmful gender stereotypes, such as the 'carer-granny'.

Ideas people suggested included: more supportive networks for older women; changing the image of older women in society; challenging ageist language; and creating a more robust legal framework for harassment, abuse and gender inequality. It was also suggested that more could be done to celebrate and showcase the talents and potential of older women.



# THANK YOU

This is a summary of the responses and can't highlight every individual point raised. However full feedback has been shared with the NACWG.

**Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their feedback – it is valuable. We'd love as many people as possible to share their ideas on our next Spotlight topics. We have a new one every two months.**