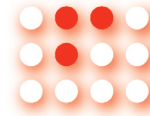
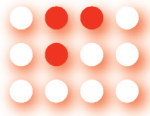


# FACT

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## Pensions, poverty and incomes of the older

The UK has the third-lowest pensions in the developed world, according to an OECD report, *Pensions at a glance*.

The Paris-based think tank said the typical British worker can look forward to a pension worth only 38% of their salary, once state and private pensions are combined. Only Mexico and Chile offer their workers a worse prospect after retirement.

Turkey tops the table as it gives its retirees an average pension equal to 105% of average wages, while the average is above 90% in the Netherlands and Austria and 80% in Spain and Italy.

In terms of incomes of older people, the UK is again near the bottom of the pile. In the UK, the incomes of all people aged over 65 are 82.3% of the population's income, below the OECD average for 32 countries of 86.8%.

The ratio was only worse than that of the UK in South Korea (60.1% of population's income), Australia (67.1%), Estonia (68.9%), Denmark (77.1%), Belgium (77.2%) and the Czech Republic (81.1%).

On average in the OECD, 12.6% of individuals aged over 65 live in relative income poverty, defined as

an income below half the national median equivalised household income.

According to the latest available figures, poverty rates of people aged over 65 were very high in South Korea (50%), Australia (36%), and Mexico (31%). In contrast, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic have the lowest poverty rates: 2% and 3% respectively. Poverty rates are close to the OECD average of 12.6% in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, and the United Kingdom.

<http://www.oecd.org/els/public-pensions/oecd-pensions-at-a-glance-19991363.htm>  
[www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/PAG2015\\_UK.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/PAG2015_UK.pdf)

## Flood safety and guidance

The Environment Agency has continued to issue warnings of severe flood and gales.

Postal workers, member of the CWU communications union, are maintaining a service to the public in the run up to Christmas despite difficult and arduous conditions created by the floods in the North of England.

The CWU health, safety and environment department has issued advice to its members, much of which applies to any worker or member of the public.

**LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT**

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Basic flood safety guidance is:

- turn around, don't risk drowning;
- avoid walking or driving through flood waters;
- don't walk in floodwater. Just six inches of moving water can knock you down and water above knee level will easily knock you off your feet;
- beware – flood water can cover open manholes, open drains, potholes, road works or objects and you won't be able to see them;
- don't drive through floodwater. Two feet of flowing water is enough to sweep your van or car away;
- if there is a chance of flash flooding, move immediately to higher ground. Flash floods can kill;
- if floodwaters rise around your vehicle but the water is not moving, abandon the vehicle and move to higher ground. However, do not leave the vehicle and enter moving, fast flowing water as there's a high risk of being washed away and drowning;
- avoid driving and parking alongside streams, rivers and creeks during heavy rainfall. These areas can flood quickly and with little warning; and
- don't touch items that have been in contact with the flood water. Flood water is likely to be contaminated and could contain sewage. Disinfect and thoroughly clean everything that's got wet.

CWU national health and safety officer Dave Joyce said: "The safety of our members is paramount and there should be no risk taken or heroics while dangerous flood waters are around us."

[www.cwu.org/news/archive/union-issues-flood-safety-warning-and-guidance.html](http://www.cwu.org/news/archive/union-issues-flood-safety-warning-and-guidance.html)

## Factory output weak

Manufacturing output remains weak latest official figures show. Factory output grew by just 0.4% in the three-month period ending October compared with the previous three-month period. That was an improvement on the 0.4% contraction in the three months to September.

Output in transport equipment increased by 3.2% and coke and refined petroleum products by 11.9%.

However, there were falls in six of the 13 subsectors, including 4.1% in textiles, 2.9% in other manufacturing and 2.2% in metals and metal products.

Manufacturing output was down by 0.5% on the same three-month period to October a year ago.

The more volatile monthly figures showed a 0.4% decrease between September and October.

Output of the production industries (manufacturing, mining and utilities) was up by 0.6% on the

previous three-month period, and up by 1.7% on the same period a year earlier.

Despite the growth seen in production and manufacturing since the economy's downturn, in third quarter 2015 output remains 9.2% and 6.4% respectively below the levels achieved before the economic crisis in the first quarter 2008.

UK manufacturing is encountering a poor end to the year amid "gathering gloom" from the global economy, according to the EEF trade association.

It has cut its manufacturing forecasts and is expecting a 0.1% fall in 2015. It has halved its forecast for next year to 0.8% growth. The EEF said that weakening demand from developed and emerging markets has become more prominent, leading to falling exports.

As well as exports, the EEF said job prospects have been hit, particularly with more spare capacity in the oil industry, which has been hit by falling prices.

[www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_426677.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_426677.pdf)

[www.eef.org.uk/campaigning/news-blogs-and-publications/blogs/2015/dec/any-festive-cheer-for-uk-manufacturers](http://www.eef.org.uk/campaigning/news-blogs-and-publications/blogs/2015/dec/any-festive-cheer-for-uk-manufacturers)

## More guidance over transgender workers

Guidance for solicitors on good practice in working with transgender employees has been published by the Law Society.

Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the *Equalities Act 2010* and the Law Society's guidance has been prepared to help solicitors fulfil their duties as employers under the act. The guidance will also be of use other workers to understand the practical, social, psychological and emotional issues relating to the process of changing gender and the issues that should be considered in the workplace to actively include an employee who is transgender.

Law Society chief executive Catherine Dixon said: "People who are transgender are entitled to be treated with the same dignity and respect afforded to others in the workplace."

The practice note provides useful summaries of the main legislation covering gender reassignment and a model transgender policy.

[www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/advice/practice-notes/working-with-transgender-employees/](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/advice/practice-notes/working-with-transgender-employees/)

## Disabled workers with invisible impairments

A good practice guide for workplace reps to help them support trade union members with invisible impairments has been published by the TUC.

Most disabled people do not have visible signs of impairment, such as the use of a mobility aid. And if a person's impairment is not visibly obvious, their right to reasonable adjustments to aid their access to work may not be as readily recognised. In some cases, a person's impairment may even be treated with disbelief by colleagues and managers.

The TUC guide, *You don't look disabled*, provides information on the role that unions can play, including in supporting members with invisible impairments. It will help educate fellow trade unionists and other workers away from the misleading stereotypes too often found in the popular press so that the widespread demonisation of disabled people is more effectively challenged.

The guide covers the equality laws that support disabled workers and provides case studies to show how problems can be addressed to stop or prevent discrimination.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "Disabled people have a much lower employment rate than non-disabled people, and not only face barriers getting a job but can encounter problems staying in work.

"There is still a long way to go before genuine equality is achieved for access to work, and treatment at work. To make progress, it is important to address popular stereotypes of disability that rarely fit the reality of individual lives."

[www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/You%20don%27t%20look%20disabled.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/You%20don%27t%20look%20disabled.pdf)

## Mergers and takeovers at low level

Mergers and takeovers involving UK companies continued at much lower levels of activity than those seen before the 2008-09 economic downturn, official statistics reveal.

In the third quarter of 2015, there was a combined total of 72 completed domestic and cross-border mergers and takeovers.

Domestic mergers and takeovers totalled 31 in the third quarter, but their value was just £0.7 billion. Comparative figures for the previous quarter were 53 takeovers worth £2.6 billion.

There were 23 completed acquisitions of UK companies made by foreign companies, worth in total £8.8 billion, against 27 acquisitions worth £9.7 billion the previous quarter.

The only large transaction during the third quarter was the acquisition of building materials group Lafarge Tarmac Holdings by its Irish rival CRH.

Successful takeovers by UK companies abroad totalled 18 with a value of just £1.6 billion against 32 transactions worth £11.1 billion in the previous quarter.

[www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_426516.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_426516.pdf)

## More women needed in science and technology

Taking practical steps to recruit and retain more women in science, technology, engineering and maths roles – or STEM for short – could help employers address skills shortages in STEM areas, the professionals union Prospect and professional body the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) have argued in new joint guidance.

Only 9% of engineers in the UK are women, according to the IET's *Engineering and technology skills and demand in industry survey 2015*. And more than half of UK businesses do not have gender diversity initiative in place.

The new guidance, *Progressing women in STEM roles*, gives employers examples of best practice and suggestions for measures they can take to attract more female candidates into STEM and ensure women are being represented and supported in their professional development.

This includes advice on how to ensure promotions are fairer among workforces of different genders and how to implement effective return-to-work programmes for women returning from maternity leave.

Sue Ferns, Prospect deputy general secretary, said that with around 20,000 members working in STEM, the union is "acutely aware of both the skills challenge these roles face and their vital contribution to building a more sustainable economy".

The union has been working hard “to encourage greater recruitment and retention of women which is key to tackling the emerging skills crisis”.

The practical guidance builds on this and incorporates the union’s pioneering work with employers in tackling unconscious bias.

There is also a background report on the subject, the result of a joint conference held by Prospect and the IET earlier this year.

The report makes the point that trade union reps are able to assist both employers and individuals by supporting them through training, which can ensure greater effectiveness when promoting diversity and inclusion.

Engaging workplace representatives in the design and implementation of equality, inclusion and diversity programmes can help to:

- positively influence policy development and staff satisfaction;
- advise on and address any discriminatory practice; and
- reduce management time resolving problems and disputes.

The report concludes that unconscious gender bias is widespread and negatively affects women professionals in STEM.

Increasing inclusion and diversity in the workforce benefits organisations and individuals but that means being strategic about the issue not merely complying with the relevant legislation.

Recruiting more young people into STEM remains a challenge, but it is crucial to support the talent pool of women already qualified and working in the science and technology fields.

[www.prospect.org.uk/news/id/2015/December/4/Prospect-guidance-help-employers-attract-more-women-STEM-roles](http://www.prospect.org.uk/news/id/2015/December/4/Prospect-guidance-help-employers-attract-more-women-STEM-roles)

## Land Registry sell-off back on agenda

To union anger, the Conservative government has announced it is to “consult on options to move operations of the Land Registry to the private sector from 2017”.

In July last year, the government revealed that nine in 10 respondents to its consultation said they didn’t agree a sell-off would make the agency more efficient and they wouldn’t be comfortable with non-civil servants doing the work. It conceded: “Overall, across virtually all respondents, it was suggested that a case for change had not been made.”

A PCS civil service union campaign also helped thwart attempts to the sell-off.

However, privatisation is now back on the government’s agenda. Buried deep within chancellor George Osborne’s spending review and autumn statement document is the line “consult on options to move operations of the Land Registry to the private sector from 2017”.

PCS has yet to receive any details on the privatisation plans, but will be insisting on an input with a view to again defeating the notion of any sell-off.

The union is also seeking a meeting with Anna Soubry, minister of state for small business, industry and enterprise, to clarify that assurances over jobs and offices provided by Land Registry chief executive Graham Farrant hold true.

The Land Registry holds more than 24 million land or property titles – the evidence of ownership – in England and Wales.

[www.pcs.org.uk/en/news\\_and\\_events/pcs\\_comment/pcs\\_comment.cfm/government-to-try-again-to-sell-off-land-registry](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/pcs_comment/pcs_comment.cfm/government-to-try-again-to-sell-off-land-registry)

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