

UK

State pension age changes: Baroness Ros Altmann calls proposal to raise threshold to 75 'immoral'

The former pensions minister said raising the threshold of eligibility by 10 years could affect older people's life expectancy



Ros Altmann said moving the state pension age to 75 was an 'outrageous betrayal of people who have worked hard' (Photo: Parliament)



by **Serina Sandhu**

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A proposal to increase the **state pension age** from 65 to 75 has been described as “chilling and immoral” by a former pensions minister.

Tory peer Ros Altmann said it was “an outrageous betrayal of people who have worked hard” and warned that it could shorten their life expectancy.

It comes after the **Centre for Social Justice (CSJ)** proposed an idea to increase the pension age from 65, which is the current threshold, to 70 by 2028, and then to 75 by 2035. The think tank said the move would “better reflect the longer life expectancies that we now enjoy and... support the fiscal balance of the nation”.

The **state pension age has increased** to bring the age for women, which used to be 60, in line with men’s **state pension** age of 65. It is now in the process of moving to 66 for both men and women, with further increases expected over the next few decades.

‘Forced to labour until they drop’

But Baroness Altmann, who was pensions minister from 2015-16, condemned the CSJ’s idea, saying she had rarely seen a proposal “with the potential to do such damage”.

She said her “jaw dropped” when she read about it.

“Forcing Britons to work until their mid-70s may help to boost the economy by £182 billion a year, but to me the idea is chilling and immoral,” she wrote in a **column for the *Daily Mail***.

“It is an outrageous betrayal of people who have worked hard, paid their taxes and made their National Insurance [NI] contributions for decades in the expectation that they will receive at least a basic income so they can retire, rather than being forced to labour until they drop.”

It was a “farcical prospect” to expect a 74-year-old who could not find work to have to claim benefits, she said.

And she added: “The British state pension has been repeatedly ravaged by successive governments.”

Helping over 50s find work

Baroness Altmann said the greater priority for the Government should be to help people aged over 50 to find work.

“More than a million over-50s want to work but can’t find a job because age discrimination is embedded in the labour market. Increasing support for these people – with retraining programmes and employer incentives – should be the first priority, before increasing the state pension age,” she said.

Over the past few months, **i** has been speaking to women affected by the state pension age changes **who have struggled to find work in their late 50s and early 60s.**

One woman said she had **applied for about 300 jobs** that she was overqualified for and still did not manage to secure any work.

Read more from *The Women Who Can't Retire* series

State pension age changes: I shouldn't be asked if I can lift my arm in ESA assessments - it's demoralising

State pension age changes: 'I'm an engineer who couldn't get a job as a cleaner. I was feeling suicidal'





Baroness Altmann has said retraining people older than 50 to find jobs should be a greater priority than changes to the state pension age (Photo: PA)

‘Death comes much sooner’

The CSJ’s idea, presented in its *Ageing Confidently – Supporting an ageing workforce* report, would also likely shorten the life expectancy of those in disadvantaged parts of Britain, said Baroness Altmann.

“The better-off, whose employment does not usually entail physical labour, might hope to live well into their 80s with good health,” she said. “But for people burned out by tough manual work, who tend to have poorer housing, diets, access to healthcare and are at greater risk of ill-health and frailty, death comes much sooner.

“This is already a grave injustice in our society. Driving up the pension age even further makes it worse – particularly for those groups who are statistically more likely to die in their late 60s or early 70s, who will suddenly see the finishing line pushed so far into the distance that it becomes meaningless.”

“The flaws in the thinking must be challenged immediately, before there is any chance of the CSJ paper being adopted by politicians who see it as an opportunity to boost the nation’s coffers,” she said.

Read more:

State Pension Age should be raised to 75 to boost economy, argues think tank founded by ex-Tory leader

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Patrick Spencer, head of work and welfare at the CSJ told [i](#) that he disagreed with Baroness Altmann's opinion.

"Eighty per cent of our report was dedicated to improving working conditions for older workers. Increasing access to support, skills training, and encouraging flexible hours for those with caring responsibilities. Work should not burn people in their 60s. In fact, the Royal College of Psychiatrists has stated publicly that work is linked to better mental health. Speak to many people over state pension age and they don't want to feel marginalised and unworthy. Speak to many people in the labour market and they recognise the huge value older workers have in terms of experience and good judgement.