

13 September 2024

Ref: FOI2024/12202

Dear

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your enquiry of 20 August 2024, which we have considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the FOI Act).

You asked for the following information:

Please can you send me the Government's internal impact assessment relating to proposals to limit the annual Winter Fuel Payment to those over state pension age who are receiving pension credit or other means-tested support.

I would be grateful if receipt of this request is acknowledged and a response received, by email, within the statutory 20-day timeframe.

Following a search of our records, we can confirm that HM Treasury does hold information within the scope of your request and have provided below HM Treasury's Equalities Impact Assessment that was part of advice provided to the Chancellor of the Exchequer ahead of her decision to target the Winter Fuel Payment.

Equality Impact Assessments are not impact assessments and are not routinely published alongside secondary legislation.

The government has followed its legal and statutory duties ahead of introducing these changes.

Ministers receive a wide range of advice ahead of taking policy decisions. The Department of Work and Pensions conducted their own internal analysis to advise the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions, which can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responses-to-freedom-of-information-requests-on-equality-impact-assessments-produced-for-targeting-winter-fuel-payment>

The statistics used within the analysis below are based on Census 2011 data, with characteristics compared across age groups. In this analysis 'pensioners' are adults who are aged 65 and over as Census data does not split age bands at State Pension age, which is currently age 66. 'The rest of the population' refers to those aged 16-64.

The statistics are on a UK-basis, except disability statistics which are on a GB basis due to data restrictions.

41. **Equalities:** It is a legal requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010 for you to pay due regard to the equalities impacts of this policy for those sharing one or more of nine protected characteristics.

42. The WFP is currently a universal benefit for all over the SPa, as a result any changes to the eligibility will negatively affect all individuals over 65 and not currently in receipt of PC. Pensioners are more likely to have a disability than the rest of the population (54% vs 13%), are more likely to be white (93% vs 84%), and are more likely to be married, separated or widowed (94% vs 58%). Pensioners are also disproportionately women compared to the rest of the population: 56% vs 50%. As a result this measure will disproportionately negatively affect these groups. PC specifically is disproportionately claimed by older, single women.

43. As detailed above pursuing this reform will mean that 84% of those currently in receipt of WFP will no longer be so, some of these individuals may be eligible for PC but have not claimed or may be just above the threshold to receive the benefit, these individuals are likely to be significantly negatively affected.

44. As set out in the above advice there are ways to somewhat mitigate these impacts, e.g. government could explore ways to improve PC take up, such as bringing forward the Housing Benefit (HB)/PC merger or engaging with stakeholders on how to improve PC take up.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero also recently published statistics on Fuel poverty and Winter Fuel Payment in England which you may find useful. These can be accessed via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-and-winter-fuel-payment-in-england-ad-hoc-statistics-2023-and-2024>

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us. Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Information Rights Unit

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Email: foirequests@hmtreasury.gov.uk

It would assist our review if you set out which aspects of the reply concern you and why you are dissatisfied.

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