Pensions Policy Institute

PPI

Launch Event Write Up

Pensions Data Project: Using Data to Understand the UK's Pension Landscape

Overview

The Pensions Data Project

On Thursday 09 October 2025, the Pensions Policy Institute (PPI) hosted a launch event on behalf of the **Pensions Data Project (PDP).**

The event delivered the latest findings from the Private Beta Phase of the project. The PDP is an ongoing collaboration, involving Legal & General, Nest, now:pensions, the Pensions Policy Institute, People's Partnership and Smart Pension, designed to improve the existing evidence base and aid in better understanding of retirement in the UK.

The event, attended by over 50 senior industry stakeholders, was kindly hosted by Smart Pension, chaired by Chris Curry, Director (PPI) and featured a panel discussion with representatives from the PDP Board,

1. **Colin Clark**, Head of Product Policy Strategy (L&G)
2. **Richard Notley**, Senior Analyst (Nest Corporation)
3. **Lizzy Holliday**, Director of Public Affairs and Policy (now:pensions)
4. **Tim Gosling**, Head of Policy (People's Partnership)
5. **Ian Digby**, Director of Policy & Regulation (Smart Pension)

The PDP, which has been in the planning for several years, is a long-term research partnership bringing together data from across the pensions industry to explore the distribution and dynamics of UK pension saving. Its purpose is to build a more comprehensive, longitudinal understanding of how pension pots accumulate, consolidate and interact with labour market trends and policy reforms.

The event showcased findings from the Private Beta Phase, which combined administrative data from the five master trusts. Data consolidation and analysis was carried out by PwC. It represents one of the most significant cross-provider data collaborations in the pensions sector to date. The findings offer new insight into pot sizes, saver behaviour, and provides evidence on the potential impact of forthcoming policy initiatives, such as small pots consolidation and Pensions Dashboards.

The event was opened by the Project Lead, Nicky Day (PPI), who emphasised that while the PDP has been in development for several years, this phase marks a step forward, demonstrating the feasibility and value of combining real administrative data across providers to support policy, regulation and industry practice.

Nicky Day, Project Lead, PPI presented the key findings from the report. Some key points highlighted include:

- **Growth in pension wealth:** Pot values have increased across all participating schemes, with the average pot size roughly doubling by 2023.
- **Persistent disparities:** gender gaps remain – women's pension pots continue to make up a smaller share of men's, reflecting differences in earnings, working patterns and career interruptions.
- **Small pots challenge:** More than half of all pots in the dataset are valued at under £1,000, underscoring the scale of the small pots challenge.
- **Multiple pots per saver:** The average saver held 1.3 pension pots, demonstrating just how fragmented saving has become, and highlighting the importance of tools such as Pension Dashboards, and frameworks that encourage consolidation.
- **Comparative context:** Average pot sizes are smaller than those reported in the Wealth and Assets Survey (WAS), indicating that many individuals covered by this dataset are likely to hold additional pension pots in other schemes not yet included.

The findings also modelled how these pots might behave under the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) proposed small pots consolidation framework. If all participating schemes acted as authorised consolidators, around 2 million pots included in this dataset could be merged, helping reduce administrative costs and improve member outcomes.

The subsequent panel discussion and Q& A session, held under Chatham House Rule, explored the implications of the findings, the challenges of improving data quality, and the opportunities that better coordination could unlock for the pensions industry. Key topics discussed included:

Data Matching and Digital Identity

Participants and panel members highlighted the limitations of existing identifiers and the difficulties of matching data across schemes without a digital identifier. The project could not perform "fuzzy" matching, illustrating the need for a National Insurance Number (NiNo) or a comparable digital identifier to improve record accuracy. Panellists agreed that such developments would significantly complement and enhance the functionality of the Pensions Dashboards and enable better data integration.

Data quality and the role of employers

Master trust representatives noted that auto-enrolment was designed to be a low-friction process, but this also means providers depend heavily on the quality of data supplied by employers. Errors and incomplete records can persist for years. While providers undertake ongoing efforts to clean data and encourage members to update details, systematic solutions to this point will be required to ensure accuracy at scale.

Small pots and consolidation

The findings reaffirmed the urgency of addressing pot proliferation. Many micro pots arise from opt-outs or short periods of employment and are uneconomic to manage. Some attendees suggested raising the £1,000 threshold that defines a "small pot," reflecting growth in pot values and inflation since the benchmark was set.

Market coverage and representativeness

Panellists stressed the importance of expanding the dataset to include a wider range of schemes, particularly those operated by 'life' providers. Broader participation will ensure that the PDP's findings accurately represent the full DC pensions market and help inform future policy design.

Comparability with Survey-based datasets

The project's findings complement survey-based measures such as the Wealth and Assets Survey (WAS), together offering a valuable opportunity for deeper analysis of pension saving behaviour, labour market mobility, and the evolution of the pensions market over time.

The PPI aims to expand the project's scope by inviting further scheme participation and collaborating with the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This collaboration would allow qualified researchers to access anonymised data to test policy options, model consolidation impacts, and track saver outcomes over time.

Closing the event, participants reflected on the project's momentum and its role in shaping a more transparent and data-driven pensions landscape. As the UK moves into a new phase of reform (with consolidation, dashboards, Value for Money and decumulation solutions all in the pipeline), robust data will be central to ensuring that policy decisions deliver meaningful improvements in retirement outcomes.

The Pensions Data Project represents an important step in that direction, demonstrating the value of cross-industry collaboration and providing a practical model for using administrative data to strengthen evidence, enhance data quality, and inform policymaking across the pensions sector.

www.pensionsdataproject.org.uk