

Nearly 500,000 Brits overseas face poverty after pension increases frozen

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Nearly 500,000 elderly Brits living overseas have launched a campaign to get their frozen pensions uprated before they fall into poverty.

Those who emigrated abroad have not had annual increases in their pensions for 70 years except where Britain has a reciprocal agreement with the country they now live in.

And successive governments have been reluctant to strike such deals because

of the extra £640million cost to the £110billion a year pensions bill.

That means World War II veteran Anne Puckridge, 98, of Calgary, must live on a weekly pension of £72.50 a week after moving to Canada when she was 76 to be near her family.

Had she remained in the UK she would be due more than double that from April when pensions go up to £156.20.

She was with Indian armed forces during the last war and is one of 60,000 military vets now settled abroad hit by pension freezes, some living on as little as £40 a week.



Many people who emigrated haven't had annual increases for 70 years (

Image:

PA)

She said: "I served my country and paid National Insurance contributions every week just like everyone else. I consider this theft.

"I am now discarded in old age, abandoned and denied the much-needed increases I thought I would receive

"I'll fight until the day I die for pension rights. We earned our pensions and we paid for them in full."

There are 106 countries in which retired Brits are paid their pensions at the amount they would have received on the date they left the UK.

The 385,000 who are living in the EU - 103,000 in Spain - have their growing pensions protected under the [Brexit](#) withdrawal agreement. There is also a reciprocal deal with the US for the 128,000 Brits there.

But many of the 224,000 Brit pensioners in Australia, 126,000 in Canada, 64,000 in New Zealand and 31,000 in South Africa are struggling to get by.

And if the poorest of them are forced to return to Britain they will need social housing and join lengthening [NHS](#) waiting lists.

Former chair of the International Consortium of British Pensioners Nigel Nelson, 70, of Kelowna, British Columbia said: "With falling exchange rates, Anne's pension is converting to fewer Canadian dollars, yet food and heating prices are going through the roof.

"If my wife and I had emigrated 100km south to the US we would have received indexed state pensions. Instead we have lost £13,000."

The Consortium estimates that a cheaper partial uprating would only cost £30million.

Ex-Pensions minister Ros Altmann added: "This has been tested in the courts and the UK Government was found to have the right to withhold uprating if

there is no reciprocal arrangement. But it does seem rather harsh to me.”

Dennis Reed of campaign group Silver Voices said: “It is scandalous that UK citizens who have paid their dues are now on the poverty breadline.

“Out of sight, out of mind, is the Government approach to these proud Britons. It is time to right this historic wrong.”

According to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Frozen Pensions only one in ten people were officially informed of what they faced before leaving Britain.

It expressed most concern about “veterans, former public servants and members of the Windrush Generation who have returned to their country of birth.”

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