

The Investor

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Women and wealth: a growing frontier

The trillion pound wealth transfer will benefit women most – but are they planning for their future?



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It's fair to say that not only has geopolitical volatility been ongoing, but it has ratcheted up a gear since our last issue of The Investor. From the US-Israel war in Iran, to political uncertainty about the prime minister's future here in the UK, it has been a turbulent time.

Yet against that backdrop, the importance of taking steps to protect yourself financially and build for the future stands out – as does the value of having a trusted financial adviser who can help you on your journey.

In this issue, we look at the growing financial power held by women and ask whether they are being well served by the financial services industry. At SJP, we believe female financial advisers have a key role to play and we highlight our campaign here.

Meanwhile, having a plan in place in the form of critical illness insurance or income protection cover can stand you in good stead at times of vulnerability as we examine.

With the traditional nuclear family less common than it once was, and family life taking many forms, ensuring you have a Will in place to pass on your assets as you wish is key.

Finally, if you are looking for inspiration for your holiday reading, why not take a look at the books our team are planning to take on their summer breaks?

If you'd like to discuss anything else in this issue, please do get in touch.

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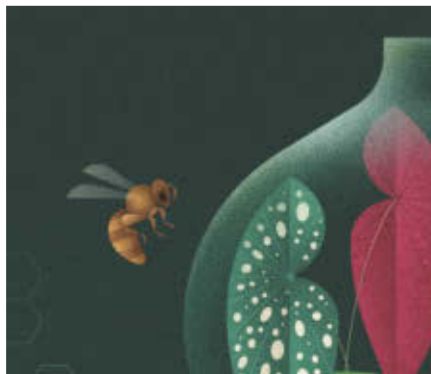
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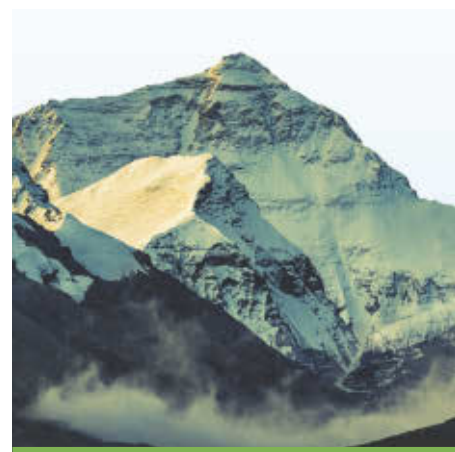
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FCA to outline plans for simplified financial advice

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is expected to publish its final plans for simplifying financial advice later this year.

This follows a consultation launched in March, which looked at how the rules around pensions and investment advice could be made easier to understand and more accessible. The FCA invited feedback from financial advice firms, as well as pension and investment providers.

At the heart of these proposals is an effort to make financial advice available to more people, and to encourage more individuals to invest for the long term.

What could change?

The FCA is considering a number of changes designed to make the advice process simpler and more proportionate to people's needs.

These include:



More flexible ongoing reviews

Advisers may no longer be required to carry out an annual review for every client, allowing reviews to be tailored to individual circumstances.



A simpler approach to gathering client information

Rather than collecting large amounts of detailed information in every case, advisers would be able to gather what is "sufficient" depending on the complexity of the advice being provided.



A more proportionate approach to risk

Advisers may not always need to use complex tools to assess attitude to risk, instead taking a more straightforward approach where appropriate.



Clearer communication with clients

Alongside these changes, the FCA has reinforced the importance of firms being:

- ♦ clear and transparent about ongoing charges
- ♦ upfront about what clients are paying for
- ♦ open about clients' right to cancel ongoing advice services without penalty

What hasn't changed (yet)

The FCA also raised the topic of "trail commission" – ongoing payments linked to certain financial products – but has not yet proposed any specific changes in this area. It is expected to be the subject of separate discussions.

What this means

If these proposals go ahead, they could help make financial advice more accessible and easier to navigate, particularly for those with simpler needs.

St. James's Place has already shared its feedback with the FCA as part of the consultation process.



"If the FCA's proposals are implemented, they will allow us to develop our advice approach further, so that the time, effort and resources we invest are more closely aligned to the needs of each client."



Alexandra Loydon,

Group Advice Director at St. James's Place (SJP)

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Could cash in equity ISAs be in the firing line?

Chancellor Rachel Reeves is reportedly considering taxing interest earned on cash held in stocks and shares individual savings accounts (ISAs) as part of broader efforts to encourage investment into equities.

Interest earned on cash within a stocks and shares ISA could be subject to a new tax of 22%, potentially from as early as next year, according to media reports.

From April 2027, the £20,000 annual cash ISA allowance will fall to £12,000 for under-65s, a reduction Reeves hopes will drive further investment into equities. The £20,000 tax-free limit will remain unchanged for equity investments made in an ISA.

Any move to charge tax on interest earned on cash would likely deter people from the practice of holding large cash balances in equity ISAs in order to avoid market exposure while still benefiting from tax relief.

If the rumoured changes are introduced then a similar treatment is expected to apply to other cash-like elements of a stocks and shares ISA, such as investments into money market funds. These could be short-term government bonds or bank certificates of deposit, for example, which provide a low-risk alternative to cash savings.

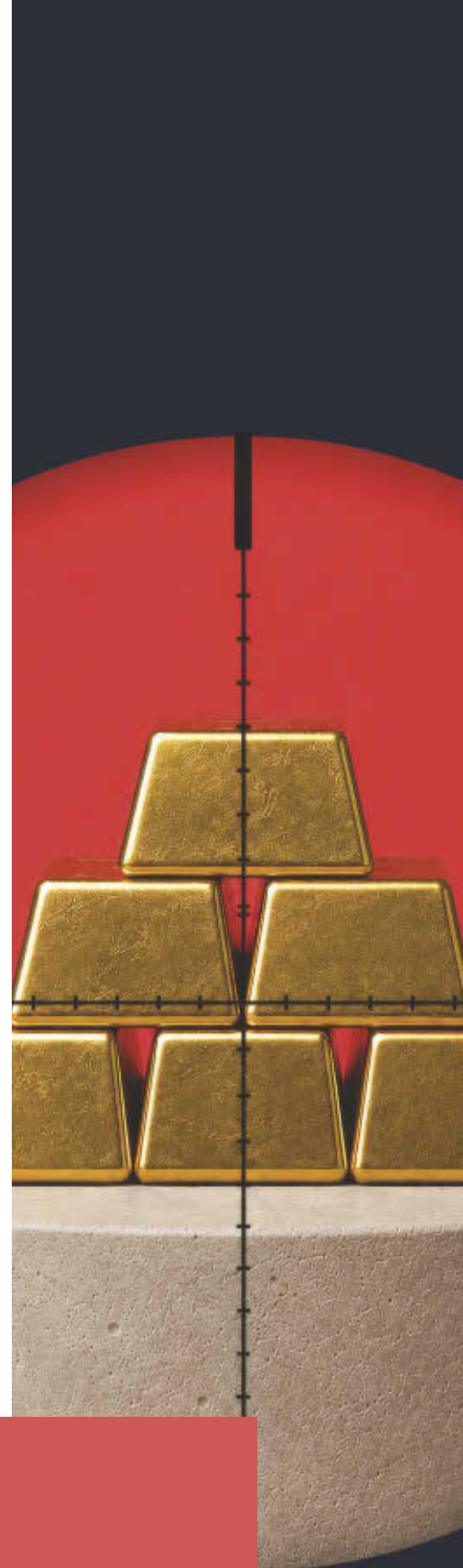
However, at the time of writing, the rumours were just that – rumours – and there is no guarantee that these changes will take place. With the difficult financial backdrop, the government will likely be looking at many options to boost its tax take and drive investment. Ahead of the Autumn Budget, there may be many more rumours before any real changes are announced.

Sources

¹ HMRC – Annual savings statistics 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-savings-statistics-2024>

FACT:

Cash ISAs remain popular among UK savers. The government's most recent statistics show cash ISA volumes of £69.5 billion, compared with £31.07 billion in stocks and shares, in the 2023/24 tax year.¹



Investing with intent

Our St. James's Place annual investment conference 'Beyond the Uncertainty' was held in June in London and attended by hundreds of delegates including Partners, advisers and exhibitors.

SJP's Chief Investment Officer Justin Onuekwusi and Chief Economist Hetal Mehta opened the day with a session titled 'Volatile conditions, resilient decisions'. Justin began by talking about how increased geopolitical volatility, political speculation, debt dynamics, and inflation were all factors reshaping the environment we invest in. The environment has become more complex and risks less symmetric and 'resilience is no longer optional.'

Hetal talked about how the Iran war had driven uncertainty. She said: "We are facing inflation shocks in this heightened geopolitical environment. The geopolitical risks are going to be here for quite a while."

Furthermore, Justin pointed out that 'not all volatility is born equal'. He highlighted that 'factoral differences are causing volatility, with a huge amount of dispersion over the past year.' This is shown in global equity markets where momentum has significantly outperformed value and quality over the last 12 months.

External fund managers Capital Four and Nick Entwisle, SJP's Senior Fixed Income Investment Analyst, held a session focused on navigating uncertainty in credit markets. During this they discussed why high yield bonds were high yielding and how to harvest the yield while managing risk.

Other topics on the agenda included balancing risk, return and resilience, during which SJP's Director of Portfolio Management, Robin Ellis, addressed how SJP's investment team construct portfolios for good long-term outcomes. Trevor Greetham and Hamish Gibberd discussed diversified and active fund management and the benefits to investors.

Meanwhile, SJP's Investment Specialist Preksha Shah presented a session titled 'How do you solve a problem like retirement?' In this Preksha highlighted the issue of the UK's ageing population, with 50% of people due to be at retirement age by 2070, up from 30% today. This highlighted the need for Partners and clients to ensure they build a sustainable portfolio to support them through retirement.

The conference also featured a live leadership Q&A panel with SJP's Chief Client Officer Rob Sanders; Director of Investment Solutions, Lea Blinoff; Deputy Chief Investment Officer Joe Wiggins; and Investment Specialist Neil Fisher.

Keynote speaker Tina Fordham of Fordham Global Foresight and SJP's Hetal Mehta held the final session of the day 'Seismic change – 2026 outlook', in which they discussed what may lie ahead in a rapidly changing world.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place can go down as well as up. You may get back less than you invested.



Photo: Laura Rimmer, St. James's Place

Women and wealth:

A growing frontier

BY JO THORNHILL

Women own more wealth than at any time in history. Money is being earned, created through entrepreneurship, and inherited by women through wealth transfer at a rapidly growing rate.

But for many women there are still significant barriers to growing their money and gaining financial security.

This is because they must navigate a financial and economic system designed predominantly by men, which often doesn't reflect their lives.

That said, a quiet revolution is happening. With women holding more wealth in their own right, they are beginning to demand a different approach from financial services providers – and from financial advice.

While the pace of change is likely to be slow, a shift is on the horizon.

The trillion pound wealth transfer

One of the biggest factors behind the growth in female-owned wealth is the seismic transfer of assets set to take place in the coming years.

The “great wealth transfer” as it is known, refers to the large-scale movement of assets between generations. Widely reported research suggests trillions of pounds will be passed between spouses and down the generations through inheritance over the next 20 years.

It will lead to the majority of the UK's wealth being in female hands, which has significant implications for the financial services industry.

It will also present new and growing opportunities for financial advisers, not least for female advisers.

Many women who inherit a legacy and decide to seek financial advice may prefer to talk to a female financial adviser. This is often because they consider a woman will better understand their life experiences, goals and financial approach.

Alexandra Loydon, Group Advice Director at St. James's Place (SJP), says: “We know a huge transfer of wealth is set to happen in the coming decades as the estates of the baby boomer generation pass on significant wealth to beneficiaries. But there can be a stark difference in approach to finances and investment between the genders, and between generations.” ▶





“Our research shows that women, in particular, respond best to investing messages that are clear, concrete and tangible.¹ They are also likely to want advice from someone who understands and can relate to their experiences. Financial advisers who appreciate and respond to this are likely to form the best long-term relationships with female clients.”



Alexandra Loydon,
Group Advice Director at St. James's Place (SJP)

Rising to the top

It is not just inherited money that women are looking to manage, invest and grow. Women are creating their own wealth in bigger numbers than ever before, through entrepreneurship and business.

More women are also rising to higher management and executive positions, albeit the pace of growth is slow and a significant gender pay gap persists.

Around one in five (18%) of the UK's 5.3 million active companies is female-led, while a further 17.3% are mixed-led, according to The Gender Index Report 2026.² Across the economy, both in 2024 and 2025, the turnover of female-led companies grew significantly faster on average than male-led and companies with mixed leadership teams.³

Added to this, 44.4% of board members of FTSE100 companies are women (this includes executive directors and non-executive directors). This has grown from around 20% in 2014, according to the government-backed FTSE Women Leaders Review 2026.⁴

The financial challenges for women

While there has been strong progress for some women in the workplace and for female business owners in recent years, there continue to be financial challenges for many others.

Women live longer than men on average, but due to the continued gender pay gap, and more women than men having gaps in their career due to caring responsibilities, there is a significant gender pension gap. This leaves many women with inadequate retirement savings.

SJP's Financial Health Report 2026: Women and Wealth found women are significantly more likely to have taken a break from paid work compared to men (56% versus 38%). Almost one in five women (19%) said they felt less financially secure due to their time out of the workplace, compared to 18% of men.⁵

Women can also be deterred from investing due to a confidence gap. This problem is exacerbated by industry messages that, generally speaking, tend to appeal more to men than women.

Evidence of a big gender gap in investing was revealed in the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)'s Financial Lives Survey 2024. It found men were more than one

and a half times more likely than women to invest.⁶ Our Women and Wealth Report also highlighted the issue of this gender divide, finding less than one in three women (27%) invest, compared to 43% of men.⁷

Samantha Bradford, Founder and Chartered Financial Planner at Simplicity Financial Planning in Milton Keynes, says female clients often hold the misconception that investing is 'too risky' or unsuitable for them. But this frequently comes down to how it is communicated. ▶



“Many people (not just women) can be scared off by financial jargon, or feel they'll be judged if they don't fully understand everything. But engagement and confidence increase when investing is explained clearly and in real terms. It doesn't have to be complicated. It's about looking at your full financial picture, seeing what you have now, and where you want to be in the future. Women tend to respond well to this approach. Using a financial plan can then help you to reach the important goals.”



Samantha Bradford,
Simplicity Financial Planning

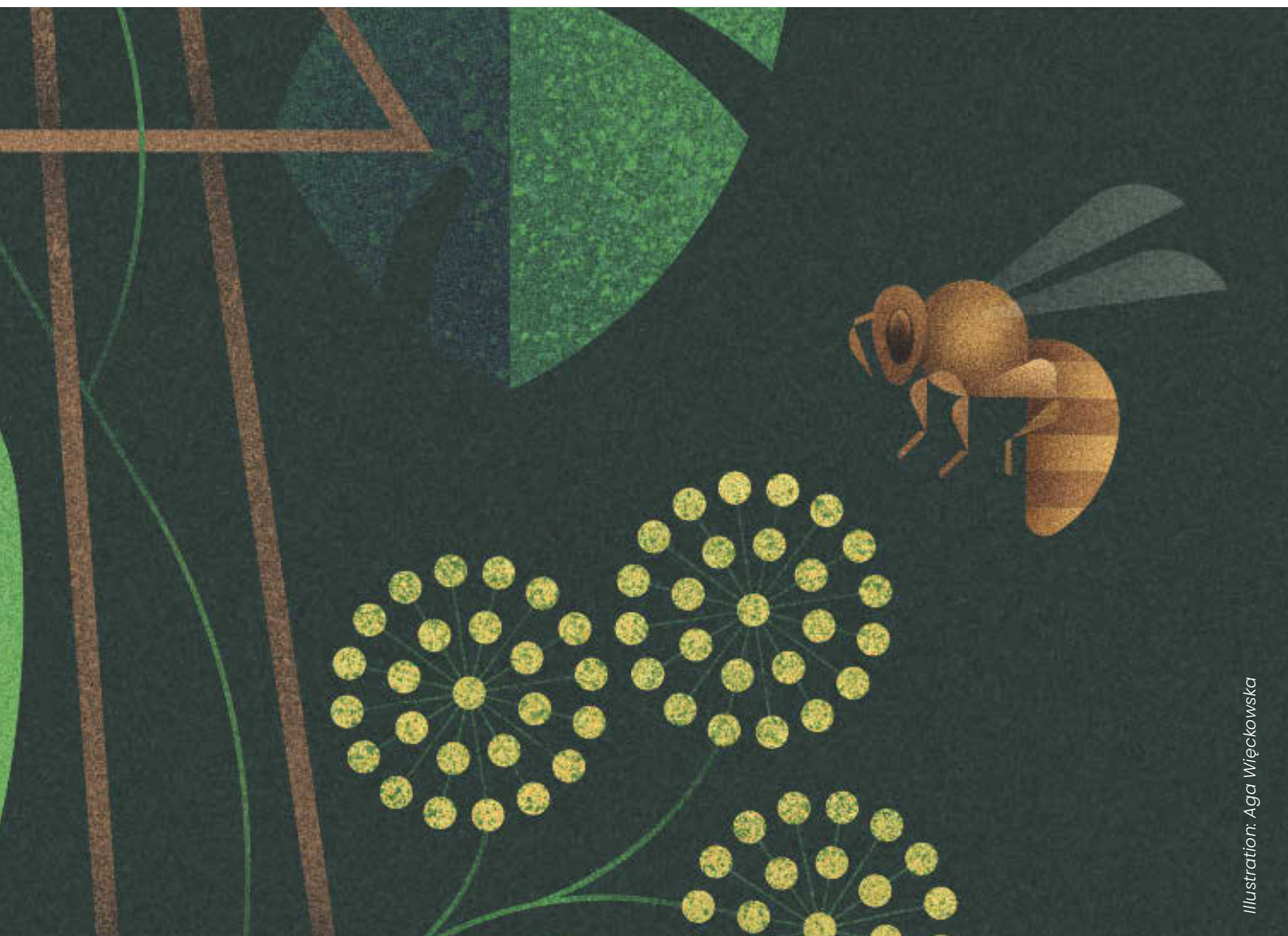


Illustration: Aga Więckowska

Can female advisers steal a march?

The growing wealth of women is likely to lead to an increased demand for female financial advisers. Research shows women are more likely than men to seek financial advice from someone of the same gender.

The Financial Health Report 2026: Women and Wealth found 12% of women preferred to speak to a female adviser. This compares to just 7% of men who said they preferred a male adviser.

Among younger women the preference is even stronger, with 23% of women aged 18 to 34 saying they are more comfortable discussing finances with a female adviser. This compares to just 11% of women aged 35 to 54, and 5% of women aged over 55 who expressed a strong preference.⁸

Among women who say they would prefer a female adviser, the main reasons are feeling less intimidated and judged. Many also believe a female adviser is more likely to understand the specific challenges faced by women, such as different working patterns, career breaks and caring responsibilities.

Against the backdrop of the great wealth transfer, if these findings stack up, female advisers look set to be in high demand.

Gee Foottit, Recruitment Campaigns Lead at the St. James's Place Academy, which trains SJP financial advisers, says recruiting more women is a priority for the Academy.

SJP celebrated the milestone of reaching 1,000 female advisers (around 20% of SJP's advisers) earlier this year. This slightly exceeds the industry average of 18%.⁹

Almost one in four (24.95%) of SJP's female advisers have chartered status (demonstrating a higher level of qualification), the same percentage (24.39%) as male advisers within SJP, according to SJP data in March 2026.

In addition, more than half (54.6%) of chartered female advisers also have fellowship of the Personal Finance Society (PFS), the highest level of qualification for advisers. For male advisers within SJP the proportion who are fellows is 47.6%.

"As the growth in women's wealth accelerates, so too does the demand for female financial advisers," says Gee. "We are keen to support women looking to forge a path in financial advice, and we know the future career for them is bright. Women make up 27% of those in the Academy, and we hope to push this up above 30% by the end of next year." ▶



Illustration: Aga Więckowska

What women want from financial advice

The growth in female wealth presents opportunities for the financial advice sector. But many women are looking for a different style of financial advice, which better serves their needs and financial goals. Claire Trott, Head of Advice at St. James's Place, believes women are looking for an adviser who understands their outlook, priorities and concerns.

"In previous generations, so often women wouldn't even have a seat at the table when it came to talking about household finances and investments. But that has shifted," says Claire.



"Wives and daughters stand to inherit significant sums. Women are also creating their own wealth. Financial advisers need to ensure everyone is involved in the conversations around the family's finances, and as early as possible, to ensure everyone is engaged and empowered."



Claire Trott,
Head of Advice at St. James's Place (SJP)

But many women still don't feel financial advice is the right step for them or that it suits their way of managing their money.

This may be due to the financial advice sector being viewed historically as male-dominated. Many women don't see it as a space that will be tuned in to their needs or goals.

SJP's 2026 Financial Health Report found only 25% of women had accessed financial advice in the last 10 years, compared to 31% of men.

Of those women not accessing financial advice, one in four said they felt their financial affairs were simple and didn't require professional advice, while one in five also said they didn't think they earned enough money for advice to be worthwhile.

Around one in eight (12%) said they didn't think advice was right for them. One in six (16%) say they wouldn't know where to start in seeking advice.¹⁰

Claire says: "Undoubtedly there is work to do in reaching more women who would benefit from advice. For advisers who can rise to the challenge, using effective communication which resonates with women, I am hopeful we will start to see that change happening."

But, Claire adds, for those who feel professional financial advice is out of reach due to cost, it is important to talk through financial issues and concerns with someone. This might be a trusted family member or Citizens Advice, for example.

The value of advice

While take up of financial advice remains lower for women than men, evidence shows it can significantly boost women's confidence about handling their finances.

The Financial Health Report 2026: Women and Wealth found only four in ten women (44%) were confident making changes to investments on their own, compared to 63% of men. But among women who receive ongoing advice, there was a marked uplift, with 74% saying they were confident making changes to their own investments.

And when it comes to managing a large windfall, such as an inheritance, only around half (54%) of women said they felt able to do this alone. Again, among women who receive ongoing advice their confidence in this is much higher, with 82% saying they would be confident managing a significant windfall.¹¹

Samantha at Simplicity Financial Planning, says: "The research shows there is a confidence and resilience that comes from knowing a solid financial plan is in place."

Planning for the future

The power of a financial plan can make a significant difference in women's lives, regardless of their life stage or wealth.

Whether a woman is looking to invest earnings, get protection policies in place, plan ahead for retirement, or they've inherited money, planning with a financial adviser can help bring clarity, confidence and peace of mind.

Undoubtedly there is work to do in reaching more women who would benefit from advice.

And for those thinking ahead about passing on an inheritance to the next generation, SJP's Claire Trott advises people to think early about organising important documents together in one place. This is likely to include Wills, powers of attorney, as well as the contact details of financial advisers and financial providers. Ensure that relevant family members know how to access this important information.

"Those families who can have open and honest conversations about the future, and about their money and their wishes once they're gone, will help their beneficiaries much more in the end. And that can help at a difficult time," says Claire.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds selected and may fall as well as rise. You may get back less than the amount invested. ♦

Illustration: Aga Węckowska



Sources

- 1 Behavioural Science Report, March 2026, St. James's Place, in partnership with Ipsos
- 2 The Gender Index Report 2026, The Gender Index (TGI). Results were compiled from analysis of 5,316,687 active companies
- 3 The Gender Index Report 2026, The Gender Index (TGI). Research details as above.
- 4 FTSE Women Leaders Review 2026
- 5 Financial Health Report 2026: Women and Wealth. St. James's Place. Opinion, on behalf of St. James's Place surveyed 6,000 UK adults nationwide between 17th March and 9th April 2026. Quotas and post-weighting were applied to the sample to make the dataset representative of the UK adult population
- 6 Financial Lives Survey 2024, Financial Conduct Authority
- 7 Financial Health Report 2026: Women and Wealth. St. James's Place. Research details as above
- 8 Financial Health Report 2026: Women and Wealth. St. James's Place. Research details as above
- 9 Financial Advice Market Survey 2025, Financial Conduct Authority April 2026
- 10 Financial Health Report 2026: Women and Wealth. St. James's Place. Research details as above
- 11 Financial Health Report 2026: Women and Wealth. St. James's Place. Research details as above



Protecting your future

BY DAVID FREITAS

When asked what matters most in life, most of us think of family and relationships, a home, other assets, or a combination of these. But if your income were to suddenly stop, how prepared or able would you be to protect what you treasure most?

Talking about the possibility of temporary or permanent sickness – and of course, death – is rarely top of anyone's list. After all, no one wants to dwell on what might happen to those we love the most.

And yet, the harsh truth is many of us will find ourselves – and our finances – vulnerable due to illness or serious physical harm at some stage in our lives.

For people under 65, official UK statistics show that the likelihood of being diagnosed with a serious illness such as cancer is higher than the likelihood of dying.¹ Such stark figures highlight the importance of preparing for events that might negatively affect our health.

Having a plan in place to cover your ongoing bills if you became ill or unable to work can provide peace of mind and allow you to concentrate on recovery, particularly if you have a family to support.

The need for protection – will the state provide?

Many people overestimate the role of the state in providing financial support during periods of difficulty. Much of the support available is either contributory (based on the level of national insurance contributions individuals have made) or means-tested, and eligibility definitions for benefits are extremely tight.

For example, someone who loses their job may be eligible for jobseeker's allowance (JSA). Contribution-based JSA is payable for a maximum of six months. In the 2026/27 tax year, someone aged 25 or over who qualifies for this benefit can receive up to £95.55 per week.² However, JSA is a taxable benefit in the UK, so if your income is more than your personal allowance (for example, through investments or other income) then you may be taxed on this sum.

Many people also often misunderstand the role of an employer in providing appropriate cover. An employee may rely on a group income protection scheme to meet their financial commitments in case they become unable to work. While group income protection policy is a valuable workplace benefit, the deferred period (how long someone must wait before the payments begin) is normally around 26 weeks, to start around when statutory sick pay (SSP) ends.

SSP is a contributory benefit which comes from the employer. It pays out up to £123.25 per week (or 80% of average weekly earnings if lower) in the 2026/27 tax year, for up to 28 weeks.³ It is also a taxable benefit. ▶

Vulnerability and money

Vulnerability is not always linked to sickness or disability. It can arise in many situations and doesn't always have a physical cause or outcome. Insurance products are designed to help protect your finances during these times, reducing the risk of financial strain when you need support most.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) recognises that people can face difficulties at different points in their lives, which may affect how they manage their money or make financial decisions. It expects financial firms to take this into account and to support customers in a way that helps them achieve good outcomes – especially when they are going through a challenging time.

Research by the FCA indicates that 49% of all adults have shown at least one characteristic of vulnerability.⁴ It has set out a number of areas where vulnerability can arise from.

These include:

- ♦ Life events – such as bereavement, job loss or relationship breakdown
- ♦ Poor health – conditions or illnesses that reduce a person's ability to carry out daily activities
- ♦ Resilience – a low ability to withstand financial or emotional shocks
- ♦ Capability – low financial knowledge, low confidence in managing money or poor skills in other relevant areas.

Mortgages

For many people, a mortgaged home represents the largest financial commitment of their lifetime. Given most people live in their own homes, it is sensible to ensure payments can continue if their income is disrupted.

Individual income protection policies are set up to provide a regular monthly income if someone is unable to work due to illness or injury. Such policies will typically pay benefits of 50–60% of gross earnings when a successful claim is made. This is usually tax free, because the premiums for individual policies are paid out of your income, which has already been taxed. The cost of income protection depends on personal details, such as your health and your occupation, as well as the term of the policy and the deferred period.

Conventional income protection insurance normally continues to pay until the policyholder returns to work, dies or reaches the end of the policy (often a specified age such as 65). Once set up, it is intended to be a long-term policy rather than a plan that is renewed, and insurers cannot cancel cover because of the number of claims made. The flexibility of receiving an ongoing income during periods of illness or injury makes income protection one of the most comprehensive long-term protection solutions available.



Sources

1 Mortality rates from the ONS (December 2025) indicate that the annual probability of death is well below 0.5% for under-65s. Cancer cases alone far exceed death risk, with incidence occurring much earlier than death for under-70s, according to NHS England (October 2025)

2 UK government – April 2026

3 UK government – April 2026

4 Financial Conduct Authority, Financial Lives 2024 – May 2025

The earlier the better

Counterintuitively, taking out income protection or critical illness cover earlier in life can result in lower overall costs. Insurers price these policies on the likelihood of illness or incapacity, which increases sharply with age.

Because premiums reflect morbidity risk, policies taken out later in life tend to be more expensive. Claims are more likely to occur, and insurers have less time to spread risk and recover costs over the life of the policy.

As a result, someone who is young and healthy may be able to secure a guaranteed (fixed) premium that is materially lower than that available to someone taking out similar cover later in life. Although the younger policyholder may pay premiums for longer, the total cost of premiums paid over time could still be lower.





Lump sum or regular income?

Critical illness insurance is designed to pay out a lump sum in the event of a serious medical event or diagnosis of a severe medical condition. Insurers will typically cover illnesses such as cancer, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, among others, as well as strokes and heart attacks.

Those who take out critical illness cover often do so to ensure they are able to meet financial commitments such as paying off a mortgage or other debts, making adaptations to their home or funding their children's school or university, if they were to face serious ill health.

It is helpful to think of income protection and critical illness as working together rather than as alternatives. They are designed to help in different ways.

For example, income protection can provide regular payments to help cover everyday living costs if you are unable to work. Critical illness cover, on the other hand, can offer a lump sum that can be used to create longer-term financial security – such as building a buffer for the future or supporting your income in later life once income protection stops paying (typically at retirement age).

Protecting a mortgage on death

While income protection and critical illness policies can indirectly support mortgage payments, there are also policies specifically designed to address mortgage liabilities in the event of death.

Certain forms of term assurance are aimed at this need. These are life insurance policies that pay a cash lump sum if the policyholder dies within a specified period.

Mortgage protection assurance is a form of decreasing term assurance. These policies provide a lump sum benefit that declines over time – broadly in line with the outstanding balance on a capital and interest mortgage.

But families with young children may instead prioritise the certainty of a regular income. A family income benefit policy is another form of decreasing term assurance that pays a steady stream of income until the end of the policy term. It is often aligned with the age at which the youngest child is expected to finish full-time education, such as 18 or 21.

Protection and life events

Each of the protection policies discussed here aims to address financial gaps that may arise if someone becomes physically or mentally ill, incapacitated or dies.

Life events such as bereavement, relationship breakdowns or job loss can also increase a household's reliance on income. Life insurance and family protection policies may help mitigate the financial impact of these situations.

Income protection can also support people who are vulnerable to financial shocks due to limited savings, high fixed costs or restricted alternative income sources.

In all cases, and particularly for those with complex needs, professional advice can help individuals understand the right cover they may require for their circumstances.

Financial protection exists to reduce the impact, duration and severity of vulnerabilities, temporary or permanent, we may experience throughout our lives. No one hopes to make a claim, but those who have can often attest to how central protection can be to a robust financial plan.

The levels and bases of taxation, and reliefs from taxation, can change at any time and are generally dependent on individual circumstances.

Please note that these protection plans do not have a cash-in value and will stop if payments to them cease. ♦

Why I became a financial adviser

BY HELEN LOVELESS

SJP adviser Isla Brown joined the St. James's Place Academy to train as a financial adviser after taking time out of the workforce. She shares her journey, what brought her back into work, and why helping women feel confident about money matters so much to her.



Photo: @brandedbyphotography

What was your route into becoming a financial adviser?

I actually started out as an employment lawyer in Glasgow. When my husband got his dream job in London, I planned to move too, but at the time, the job market in employment law here had really slowed down.

After a couple of years of weekend commuting, we decided something had to change. I had my first child at 28 and took a career break, partly because financially it made sense. I still did bits of work from home – mainly in HR – but like many people, I found that taking time out of your career can really knock your confidence.

It's something I still hear from lots of women: that feeling of "maybe I can't go back". That experience is one of the reasons I now specialise in working with women.

So how did you make the move into financial advice?

It came about in quite an unexpected way. During lockdown, I retrained as a Pilates teacher. One day, I was teaching a class and got chatting to someone who worked in finance.

I mentioned I'd always been interested in the area but assumed I was too old to start again. She was very quick to challenge that and said, "Absolutely not, we need more women in finance."

That conversation stuck with me. Not long after, I saw an advert for the St. James's Place Academy and thought, why not?

When I really thought about it, it started to make sense. My career might have looked quite varied – law, HR, Pilates – but the common thread was working with people, often at quite important or personal moments in their lives. Financial advice felt like a natural next step.

What was it like returning to work and starting a new career?

The biggest challenge wasn't talking to people – I've always enjoyed that. It was having the confidence to position myself professionally and say, "I can help you with this."

After a few years out of the workplace, that takes time to rebuild. But once I settled into it, I realised those years hadn't set me back – instead they'd actually given me a broader perspective.

**My career
hasn't followed
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and I think
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been a strength.**

You now specialise in working with women. Why is that important to you?

In my experience, many women want to feel completely comfortable and confident before making financial decisions. That's not a weakness; it's often about wanting to understand things fully and make informed choices.

I work with a lot of women going through major life transitions – such as divorce, inheritance, starting a business or becoming self-employed. At those moments, having someone who listens and explains things clearly can make a real difference.

I also think representation matters. Some clients feel more at ease speaking to another woman about money, particularly if they've had difficult experiences in the past.

How do you make financial advice feel more accessible?

A big part of it is removing the idea that you need to be wealthy to get advice.

I describe myself as a “**financial stylist**” because, in a way, that's what the job is about – tailoring things to suit your life. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach.

I try to create a space where people can have an open conversation without feeling judged or under pressure. It doesn't always have to lead to a decision straight away, sometimes it's

just about helping someone understand their options.

At the heart of it, I focus on the life someone wants to live. Then we work backwards from there to build a plan that supports it.

What would you say to someone who thinks they don't have enough money to need advice?

It's a really common perception, especially among younger people. The reality is that starting early can make a big difference, even if you're only putting away small amounts. Over time, those contributions can grow, and building good habits early makes things much more manageable later on.

It's not about having a lot of money. It's about getting into the right mindset and making a start.

Did your own experiences shape how you think about money?

Definitely. I remember having a conversation with my dad years ago where he said he'd always kept financial matters separate from family life.

We grew up with good habits, like not spending beyond our means, but we didn't learn much about investing or pensions.

It was only later, through conversations with my husband, that I started to build that knowledge. We're very open about money, and that's something I now really encourage with clients too.

What do you think you bring to the role as an adviser?

My career hasn't followed a straight line, and I think that's actually been a strength.

I've worked in different environments and met lots of different people, which has helped me understand how varied people's needs and priorities are. Everyone's situation is different, and I think it's important to adapt how you communicate and support them.

I also place a lot of importance on creating a safe space. I always say there's no such thing as a silly question – if something isn't clear, we'll talk it through. For me, it's about building a relationship where people feel comfortable, understood, and confident in the decisions they're making.

Do you see different financial concerns at different life stages?

Yes, quite clearly. For people in their 50s and 60s, it's often about reviewing what they've built – things like property, savings, pensions – and making sure they're using them in the most effective way, especially as the tax landscape changes.

In your 40s, it's more likely to be about juggling priorities such as school fees or supporting children through university.

And for younger clients, particularly those who are self-employed, it's often about understanding what they need to put in place themselves – such as savings, protection and long-term planning.

What would you say to anyone thinking about becoming a financial adviser?

Just go for it. One of the things I really value is the flexibility. Being self-employed means I can structure my work around my life – whether that's family commitments or working at different times of the day. There's also a real sense of purpose in the role. You're helping people make decisions about their future, and that's incredibly rewarding. ♦

Tailoring things to suit your life. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach.



Contact the SJP Academy if you'd like to find out more about a career as a financial adviser

Europe's vital reset

BY JAMES DUCKWORTH

The last few years have been tumultuous for much of the world, not least Europe. In February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine and three topics dominated regional concerns – energy security, rising inflation and defence. Four years on, the US-Iran conflict means these concerns are once again in the headlines. What could this mean for markets and investors?

The energy dilemma

The European Union (EU) consumes about 10% of global oil production¹ daily. Germany is the largest consumer,² accounting for about a quarter of this. Despite news of a peace deal between the US and Iran, the backlog of vessels waiting to go through the reopened Strait of Hormuz means that Europe could still face some disruption to its energy supplies in the months ahead. So far, it has proved a less severe rerun of what happened when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. But the long-term fallout remains uncertain.

Meanwhile, the effects are already being felt across the region. The UK, which imports almost half of its energy requirements, is particularly exposed. Both the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Monetary Fund have downgraded their growth forecasts for the UK. Italy, another

country reliant on imported energy supplies, is already rationing aviation fuel at some of its regional airports. In Germany, Lufthansa has announced it will cut 20,000 flights this summer. Even if a rumoured ceasefire comes into play, energy prices are expected to remain above their pre-war level for months to come. This is because stock levels have been run down and could take between six to 12 months to replenish.

Inflationary impacts

Rising energy prices are also likely to drive up inflation. Chemicals and fertilisers have already seen double-digit percentage price rises.

Prior to the start of the Iran war, it was widely expected that inflation would continue to ease across Europe. This has now changed. The European Central Bank (ECB) recently highlighted the region's vulnerabilities as "...creating upside risks for inflation and downside risks for growth."³

Meanwhile, research by the London School of Economics shows that UK food prices are now forecast to rise from an annual rate of 3.2% to 9% in 2026.⁴

The knock-on effects of higher energy prices also mean further rate cuts this year by the Bank of England (BoE) and the US Federal Reserve could be less likely.

The rise and rise in defence

The invasion of Ukraine occurred just as the global economy was reopening following the end of the pandemic. Consumers in Europe who had been forced to stay at home had more disposable income to spend as a result. However, the economic climate in 2026 is more downbeat. European consumers have endured low economic growth, a period of double-digit inflation, and a misfiring German economy at the heart of the continent. Once again, the ECB and BoE are faced with the possibility of having to raise interest rates to stamp out any resurgent inflation. But the fragile state of their economies means they will be wary of hiking rates too much and causing stagflation (when the economy is struggling but the cost of living keeps rising).

European governments are also preparing for the possible removal of the US security umbrella from the continent. This would have been unthinkable at the beginning of this decade. Many European politicians believe that even a change in US administration following the next presidential election is unlikely to reverse the trend.

After decades of many European governments failing to hit the required 2% of GDP defence spending goals, they have now committed to achieving 5% by 2035.

This comes despite record levels of debt and mounting social security obligations.

Greater financial commitment to defence spending has been a boon to European companies in this sector. Rheinmetall, Germany's largest defence company, has seen a more than tenfold increase in its share price since 2022. Other companies, including the UK's BAE Systems, France's Thales and Italy's Leonardo, have enjoyed double-digit percentage rises in the value of their shares over the same period. Multi-year orders will be needed to fulfil existing commitments to Ukraine and build up depleted stockpiles. Defence has moved to the top of the priority list for governments.



The transatlantic breakup

The change in the relationship between Europe and the US is the most notable difference between 2022 and 2026. During the first year following the Russian invasion, the US was the main supplier of military equipment to Ukraine (around 70%). Despite the war being on Europe's doorstep, Europe was very much the junior partner. Yet today, the relationship has completely changed. Europe has taken the lead in supplying Ukraine with economic and military aid, to the tune of €201 billion so far.⁵

On trade, the EU-US relationship is significant, but more complicated. In 2024, bilateral trade in goods and services was €1.7 trillion,⁶ equivalent to 30% of global trade. Before Trump's second term, trade between both parties was based on the World Trade Organisation's most favoured nation status. Both sides benefited from nil or low tariffs on most goods. Following Trump's return to the White House, he came to an agreement with the EU on a new tariff regime. While the US Supreme Court has thrown out most of Trump's sweeping "Liberation Day" tariffs, a temporary 10% surcharge now applies to most EU goods and trade conditions remain volatile. ▶

Russia and China – a painful transition for Germany

Since the end of the Cold War Germany has adopted a “change through trade” policy in its relationships with Russia and China. Germany was one of the largest importers of Russian energy. The hope was that this mutually beneficial relationship would bind Russia closer to the west and minimise any tension. With hindsight, critics argue that Germany’s use of cheap Russian energy to drive its manufacturing-led growth model was a high-risk strategy. While it was able to replace Russian-sourced energy with other suppliers post the invasion of Ukraine, higher costs have hit the manufacturing sector.

Germany’s relationship with China has also fundamentally changed. Chinese companies have rapidly climbed the value chain. In little more than two decades, Germany’s global lead in solar panels (photovoltaic) has been lost to China, where it was supported by state subsidies. It is a similar situation with electric vehicle (EV) batteries and increasingly, with cars. German vehicle exports to China have fallen by almost two-thirds since 2022. While Germany still commands technical leadership in key areas of manufacturing, China wins when it comes to the rapid scaling up of production. This gives it powerful pricing pressure.



Germany now views China less as an economic opportunity and more a competitor. This has been felt in the stock market, with investors marking down the relative value of shares in old economy/manufacturing sectors.

Europe’s AI push – too little too late?

In 2022, artificial intelligence (AI) was just making it out of the lab and into the world. Today, the US is home to most AI innovation and investment. China is a distant second, though it aims to be the global leader by 2030. Trailing behind, Europe launched its €200 million AI Continent Action Plan in 2025. This plan aims to break the continent’s reliance on US technology.

But European businesses have been held back by the heavily regulated environment. There are concerns it will hamper Europe’s approach to AI. In 2024 the EU drew up the AI Act, which is designed to ensure that AI used in the EU is safe, trusted and respects fundamental rights. The rules apply to any company implementing AI in the EU, irrespective of where they are based. Firms that fail to adhere to a standardised framework could face fines of up to 7% of global annual turnover.

A further consideration is funding European investment, both governmental and private, lags way behind the US. Research by the US Federal Reserve on AI in advanced economies shows that cumulatively, private AI funding in the US between 2013 – 2024 was more than US\$470 billion. The Magnificent 7 US technology companies (which include Apple, Amazon, Tesla and Nvidia) have announced they will spend a further US\$700 billion in 2026. The equivalent figure across the EU was US\$50 billion, with a further \$28 billion in the UK.⁷

In the EU, critics fear the regulatory and rights-driven model could end up discouraging significant investment and stifle large scale opportunities for AI innovation and growth.

Sources

- 1 Europe energy mix. International Energy Organisation
- 2 Eurostat. Interactive publications. Energy 2026
- 3 Meeting of 18-19 March 2026 – European Central Bank
- 4 “What impact is the Iran war having on the British food sector?” By Cesar Revoredo-Giha and Montserrat Costa-Font, originally published on LSE Blogs (What impact is the Iran war having on the British food sector? – LSE Business Review), licensed under CC BY 4.0
- 5 European Commission: EU assistance to Ukraine. Updated 24 April 2026
- 6 “The political costs of the US-EU trade deal outweigh the economic impact.” By Robert Basedow, originally published on LSE Blogs, licensed under CC by 4.0
- 7 “The state of AI competition in advanced economies. FEDS Notes. October 2025



A more attractive investment region?

For much of the past decade, shares in Europe have tended to look cheaper than those in the US and global markets. There are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, the US benefited from a higher growth, highly-valued technology sector. In contrast, European markets were more associated with traditional sectors such as banking, manufacturing and energy. While these often pay more generous dividends to shareholders, they are also typically lower growth and less highly valued.

The second is that Europe has faced one crisis after another. The pandemic was a global event. Similarly, higher energy prices resulting from the Ukraine invasion had effects beyond Europe. Yet the region seemed to be on the receiving end of a stream of interlinked hurdles. Higher energy costs made it harder for manufacturers to

operate, and Germany's move away from nuclear power added to those pressures. At the same time, China has shifted from being a key customer to more of a competitor, which has affected confidence in the sector.

Yet from late 2024, investors began to feel more positive about Europe. Shares in the US had become increasingly expensive, raising concerns that parts of the market – especially technology companies – could be overpriced. At the same time, higher interest rates encouraged many investors to look for better value elsewhere. Europe also started to benefit from supportive government action, including Germany's €500 billion investment in infrastructure and increased defence spending. While European markets are still cheaper than the US, the gap has narrowed.

New model Europe?

The old Europe, which played a supporting role to the US on the world stage, while relying on a risky model of cheap energy supplies and a boundless consumer market in Asia to help fuel its economy, has gone.

Europe is increasingly being forced to become self-reliant and build resilience to adapt to these new challenges. European companies are experiencing a rebound in earnings, although this could come under pressure in some areas – particularly travel, leisure and luxury goods – if the Iran war continues far into the summer. In contrast, the conflict is providing a boost to the energy sector.

With no end in sight to the war, Europe's heavy reliance on imported energy is already having an adverse effect on its economies.

However, this is not the first time the region has faced this kind of challenge. The war in Ukraine caused an even bigger spike in energy prices, yet Europe has adapted over time, and its financial markets have recovered.

Many investors are still cautious about investing in Europe. However, if the economy continues to hold up well and consumer spending improves, it could become attractive again – particularly for those looking to diversify their investments and benefit from its relative stability. ♦

1,000 and counting... but a long way still to go



In March, we celebrated reaching 1,000 female advisers in the Partnership, more than 50% of which were trained at our Academy. One in five St. James's Place (SJP) advisers are now women, slightly higher than the industry average of 18% (a figure that has increased by only 2% since 2022).¹

We're proud of this achievement but celebrate it with cautious optimism – we know there is more work to do to achieve gender parity and diversity across the industry. That's why we've set ourselves the ambitious target of aiming for at least 30% by the end of 2027.

Why do we need more women in advice?

We know the need for female advisers has never been greater. Wealth dynamics are changing and women are playing a more significant role in financial decision-making than ever before. Women are widely thought to now hold close to half of the UK's wealth, which is a testament to the pace at which women are inheriting and building their own finances.

Yet when it comes to financial knowledge and managing money, women often report lower confidence compared to men. Financial planning can seem too complicated and intimidating, which can be a barrier preventing women from seeking advice.

Women also tend to have more complex financial needs over their lifetime. Their life expectancy is higher which means their pension pots need to stretch further.

Women are also more likely to have long periods of time out of work for family caring responsibilities, which can bring down their total earnings over the span of their careers. So with more to save for and less money to do it, it's crucial more women feel empowered to receive the guidance they need to plan for – and protect – their finances.

Improving representation improves accessibility. Clients often want to speak with advisers they feel reflect their lived experiences, and many women prefer speaking to another woman about sensitive financial concerns – not because men lack skill, but because representation builds relatability and trust.

Building on momentum

By 2027, we want at least 30% of St. James's Place advisers to be women, a 10% increase from where we are today.

We've worked hard over the past few years to make our Academy programme more inclusive and practical for female trainees. For example, online delivery allows for more flexible studying around other commitments and has helped us attract women from further afield. We also offer flexible career paths upon graduation. Our newly qualified advisers can join an existing partner practice or set up their own business, both of which can provide flexible working arrangements.

Our brand-new female adviser campaign will showcase the opportunities for women interested in a career in wealth management. Over the coming months,

we'll be sharing inspirational real-life stories of the women forging successful careers as advisers and the ways in which our Academy programme can provide support and guidance. Gee Foottit, recruitment lead at St. James's Place Academy, says:

"St. James's Place has made great strides in reaching 1,000 female advisers. But there is more work to be done."

Gee adds: "We are keen to attract many more women to the Academy and into life-long careers as financial advisers.

"The role of a financial adviser can be an excellent career choice for women, offering interesting and fulfilling work helping people reach financial security." ♦

Sources

¹ Financial Conduct Authority – Financial Adviser Market Survey, April 2026



PROTECTION



Where there's a Will there's a say

BY NATASHA SIMMS

The traditional nuclear family is less common than it once was, with family life today taking many different forms. Families are increasingly more flexible and blended than ever before, shaped by relationships, responsibilities and choices. This means having a say on what assets you want to leave to whom – through a Will – has never been so important, regardless of your relationship status.

According to the 2025 National Wills Report, 79% of UK adults are comfortable talking about death.¹ Yet when it comes to considering finances, only 36% of people have made a Will.² This highlights the uncomfortable gap many of us fall into between discussing and doing.

There are many reasons for not making a Will. These range from 'not getting round to it' to thinking you're too young to need one. There is also an all-too-common assumption that partners and children will automatically receive their fair share.

However, with family structures more flexible than ever before, failing to put a Will in place could mean your hopes for your legacy are not realised. According to the latest census, there are over 780,000 stepfamilies in the UK and 16.2% of dependent children live in cohabiting couple households.³ Meanwhile, growing numbers are deciding that parenthood is not for them. As a result, so called DINK (Double Income No Kids) couples are sitting on more discretionary income and may die with leftover wealth with no direct descendants to pass it down to.

What happens if you don't make a Will?

If you die without a valid Will, the law decides what happens to your estate. These rules — known as the rule of intestacy — set out who inherits, and in what order.

In England and Wales, priority is given first to a spouse or civil partner, then to children (including legally adopted children, but not stepchildren). If there are no close family members, your estate ultimately passes to the Crown.

On the surface, this might sound straightforward. But for many families, it doesn't reflect real life. Without setting out your wishes clearly, there's a real risk that someone you care about could be left out — or that your assets could pass to someone you never intended.

Unmarried and unprepared

The concept of 'common law marriage' isn't legally recognised in the UK which can leave unwed couples financially exposed if proper planning and protection isn't in place. For example, an unmarried surviving partner would have no entitlement to any of their loved one's estate unless this wish had been explicitly documented in a valid Will.

A Will is undoubtedly the most concrete way to protect your partner and there are simple, practical options available for the admin shy.

For example, mirror Wills offer a convenient solution for couples with the same wishes and beneficiaries. They are essentially two versions of the same Will which agree for each partner to inherit the other's estate upon first death. These Wills also set out where the assets should be passed to upon second death. Given their simplicity, they are typically cheaper and quicker to implement than two separate Wills.

For unmarried couples who live together, an unexpected death can leave the surviving partner financially vulnerable, particularly where a property is involved.

In the UK, how you own your home matters. If you own a property as joint tenants, the whole property will automatically pass to the surviving partner on death. This is because the home is owned equally.

In contrast, owning a property as tenants in common means each partner owns a defined share. This allows each person to decide, through their Will, who their share should pass to when they die.

As property is often the most valuable asset in an estate, it should be a central part of any financial and protection planning. This is particularly important given the inheritance tax (IHT) rules and allowances that may apply.

In the UK, estates worth up to £500,000 are generally not subject to IHT. This is made up of two allowances — a £325,000 'nil rate band' which is the amount everyone can leave tax free; and an additional £175,000 'residence nil rate band' which may apply if you leave your home to children or grandchildren.

However, if an estate exceeds this amount, the position can differ significantly depending on your relationship status. An unmarried surviving partner may need to pay IHT on the value of the estate above £500,000. In contrast, assets left to a surviving spouse or civil partner will usually be totally exempt from IHT.

Expressions of wishes can also play a role in financial protection planning. They are commonly used for certain protection assets such as life insurance cover and — for now — pensions. Much like a Will, an expression of wishes allows you to set out who you would like to receive income or benefits after your death.

While expressions of wishes can help financially protect a partner, they are not legally binding. For this reason, they should be seen as a complement to a Will, not as a replacement for one. ▶

Planning a solo legacy

Even if you have no partner or children, it is still important to consider making a Will. Doing so means you have a say in where your remaining assets go – whether to relatives, close friends and/or causes that are important to you. For the latter, there are IHT rules which may help stretch your legacy further, such as a reduction in IHT from 40% to 36% if at least 10% of your net estate is donated to charity.

A must for everyone

Writing a Will isn't something we do for ourselves. We will never use it. It's the security we put in place for our loved ones – to help ease the administrative burden when we pass. As family arrangements become more flexible and blended, having a say on what assets you want to leave and to whom has never been so important, regardless of your relationship status.

The levels and bases of taxation and reliefs from taxation can change at any time. Tax relief is dependent on individual circumstances.

Wills are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the writing of Wills is a separate and distinct service to those offered by St. James's Place. ♦

Sources

1,2 The National Will Register, The national wills report 2025

3 Office for National Statistics, Children in families in England and Wales: Census 2021

Pension IHT changes from 2027

In the 2024 Autumn Budget, Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced changes to how pensions are treated for IHT. From April 2027, unused pension funds and death benefits will no longer sit outside an individual's estate for IHT purposes. This means that where an estate exceeds the IHT allowance, the value of any unspent pension savings could face an IHT charge of up to 40%. While pensions will still usually be distributed in line with an expression of wishes, the tax outcome may change. As a result, pensions may no longer offer the same level of IHT protection as they have in the past. This makes it important to review how they fit within wider estate planning.

**To understand how to
protect your loved ones
in a tax-efficient way,
speak to us**

Keeping things current

Writing a Will isn't a once and done. It should be reviewed at least every five years and immediately when life circumstances materially change.

A birth or adoption of a child should prompt a review and update. Upon marriage, any existing Will becomes invalid so will need to be replaced, unless it has been made 'in contemplation of marriage'.

Once a divorce is finalised, any existing Wills remain valid. However, the law treats an ex-spouse as if they have died, which means they are automatically removed as a beneficiary and cannot act as an executor unless your Will expressly states otherwise. As your circumstances and assets may have changed following a divorce, it's important to review and update your Will as soon as possible. If there is likely to be a long gap between separation and the finalisation of the divorce, then it may even be worth putting an interim Will in place. This can help ensure your wishes are clear and your estate is protected in this period.



Surviving volatility:

BY JOHNNY MINTER

What do you really need to know?

The Iran crisis saw the world enter a new period of uncertainty. With investment markets up one minute and down the next, we spoke to Preksha Shah, Chartered Financial Analyst and Investment Specialist at St. James's Place, about how investors should view the latest bout of market turbulence.

Every global crisis is unique. What has stood out to you over the past few months?

What distinguishes this one is the unusually high degree of uncertainty around its ultimate economic impact. While the immediate effects are evident, there is a risk of secondary consequences that may take longer to emerge but prove more persistent. Equally, that uncertainty cuts both ways, and it remains possible that the situation stabilises quickly with limited lasting impacts.

The Strait of Hormuz accounts for around 20% of global oil and gas flows,¹ so the potential supply disruption is significant. That said, it remains extremely difficult to assess how much of that can be plugged by reserves, increased supply from elsewhere or modest demand reductions. So far, disruption has been relatively contained, and the oil price increases we have seen appear to be driven more by investor expectations of potential supply shortages than by significant, realised supply losses.

Although it is relatively clear that this will result in both a growth shock and an inflation shock, the magnitude is very unclear. Higher oil prices point initially to a supply-side inflationary impulse, but history suggests such shocks often spill over into weaker growth as consumers and corporates become more cautious and reduce demand. While there is a clear risk of a stagflationary outcome – more notably in the UK and Europe – it is unlikely to be on the scale of anything seen in the 1970s.

With all this uncertainty, how are investors meant to cope or react?

Market corrections are an inherent part of investing. In fact, they happen far more often than we think. Market falls of 20% occur in about one in every three years. In that dynamic, it's crucial to understand the importance of being long-term focused and overlooking short-term noise.

It's also worth remembering not all global events have an impact on the global economy and investment markets. At times, investment markets can be more resilient than we anticipate.

While we cannot predict such global shocks, we can prepare portfolios to withstand short-term volatility in several ways. The key is to focus on a well-diversified allocation of assets, which also include hedge assets, which will support performance in times when core equity markets fall.

Volatility does not always mean negative returns for investors. Looking at the Middle East conflict, for example: initially there were negative returns. But more recently a lot of these losses have been undone. And by the end of May, markets were reaching record highs again.

Sources

¹ The International Energy Agency (IEA), February 2026

How have different assets behaved?

With the environment we're in, both bonds and equities have been impacted negatively overall. This is because it is an inflationary supply shock. Bonds have been hit by the inflationary pressures from the Middle East conflict, and the oil price increases. At the same time, equity markets have witnessed falls on the back of negative impacts to global growth as trade routes are affected.

In a normal dynamic, you would want bonds to be a good diversifier to equities, but there are instances like this where that isn't the case. Therefore, it's important to understand which pockets are good diversifiers in different environments. For example, our allocation to inflation-linked bonds has delivered positively during the conflict.

There are also equity examples: UK equities, an area that we are overweight in, have performed relatively well, given its defensive nature and relatively higher proportion of oil and gas companies.

Should people look to 'buy in the dip'?

We always say it's about time in the market rather than timing the market. If you look at empirical evidence over the long term, the time in the market is the key driver for lifetime returns, not the entrance points.

While it can be tempting to take a short-term punt on the market, it's very difficult to time this correctly. We believe in adhering to our long-term investment principles, focusing on valuations at the core to support our investment thesis.

You say time in the markets is what counts but for investors approaching retirement, should this mentality change?

This goes back to preparation versus prediction. The portfolio risk – the level of risk in your investments – will likely look very different for those in their 20s compared to investors in their 60s.

Generally, the idea is that if you are invested at the right risk level for your stage of life, then the volatility you will naturally see will be somewhat lower as you approach or enter that de-accumulation stage.

There is always a certain layer of volatility within markets that every portfolio is vulnerable to. But portfolios should be constructed to cope with a certain amount of market volatility.

Is there a case to be made for selling up and keeping your money in cash until this uncertainty is over?

Market volatility can naturally worry investors. However, it is important to understand portfolios are designed

to absorb such volatility. If we, as an investment team, see the vulnerability in markets causing concerns from a long-term structural perspective, then we can reduce risks from our side. However, this should be focused on structural, fundamental, long-term view, not short-term noise.

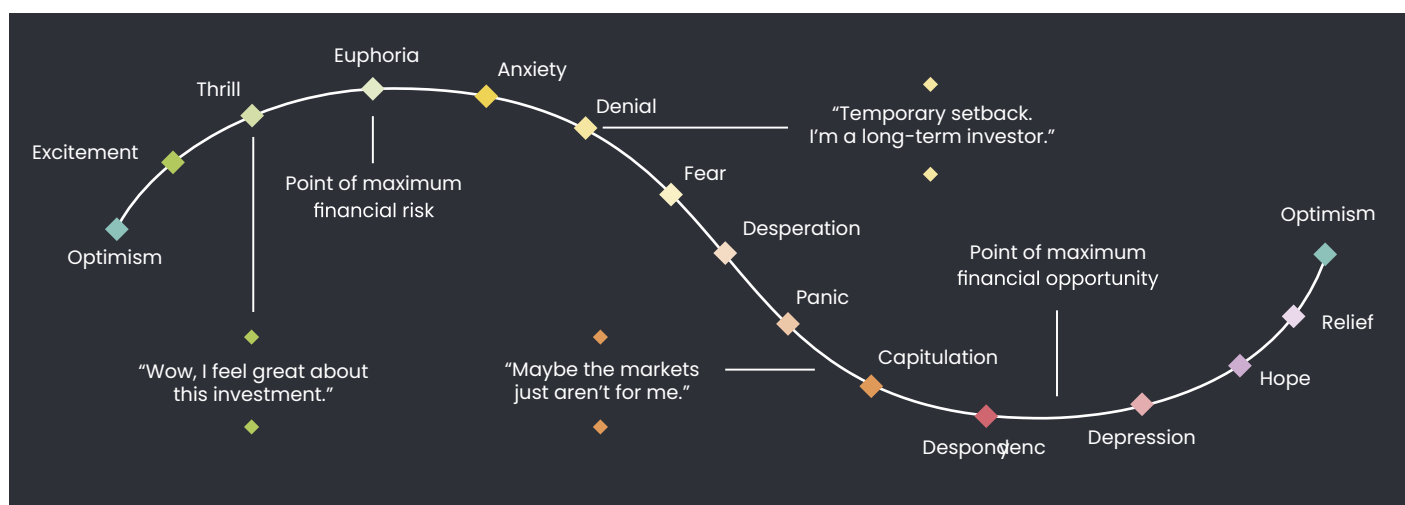
There will always be some volatility in the market. This year, it's the Middle East conflict. Last year we had tariffs. 2022 saw an inflationary shock. In 2020 it was Covid. Yet over the course of these years, overall markets delivered great returns. In fact, in the last couple of years, we've seen double digit equity returns, much higher than historical averages.

Also, being in cash has its own risks. Once you take inflation into account, cash will erode in value. Furthermore, if you're constantly taking money out of markets and putting it in cash every time you see volatility, you won't benefit from the long-term growth that markets historically show.

The best approach is to invest with a long-term mindset and stick to your investment principles. This raises the chance of seeing positive returns on your investment journey.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds you select and the value can therefore go down as well as up. You may get back less than you invested. ♦

The cycle of emotions



Summer : Time to read?

With summer finally here – and many of us dreaming of our next break – we asked some avid readers at St. James's Place to tell us a little about the books they are hoping to read on their summer holiday.

Caroline Waddington,
Chief Financial Officer

A Little Life

By Hanya Yanagihara

This will be a re-read for me. It's a novel about friendship, love and the lasting impact of early experiences. It's not an easy read, but it is a powerful reminder of the importance of kindness, empathy and connection.

London Falling

By Patrick Radden Keefe

This is narrative journalism that begins with a tragic death and gradually reveals a side of modern London shaped by money, ambition and blurred moral boundaries. It sounds like a compelling read!

Meltdown

By Duncan Mavin

This is an account of Credit Suisse's downfall, exploring how culture, governance and leadership decisions can shape – and undermine – long established institutions. I have chosen this so I can compare it with my actual experience of living through CS's sad demise.

Peter Hoffer, Head of Social
Media and Digital Services

A Swim in a Pond in the Rain

By George Saunders

George Saunders's collection of lectures showcases the infectious joy of reading and ultimately, what it means to be human.

The High Window

By Raymond Chandler

Sharp, compact, yet full of humour, Chandler's precise metaphors reflect the underlying menace of a sunny Los Angeles. The High Window is not as well-known as his other works, yet it's this book I return to most often.

Drive your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead

By Olga Tokarczuk

The novel's narrator Janina Duszejko is an outsider – she's a former teacher and fan of William Blake living in rural Poland (a character after my own heart). People in the village start to die in mysterious circumstances. Could the culprit be... the local wildlife?

Carlota Estraguez Lopez,
Equity Strategist

Wuthering Heights

By Emily Brontë

If you are like me and have never read this before the recent film release, it's the perfect moment to pick it up. Nothing says summer like tortured souls and the gloomy Yorkshire moors.

The Expectation Effect

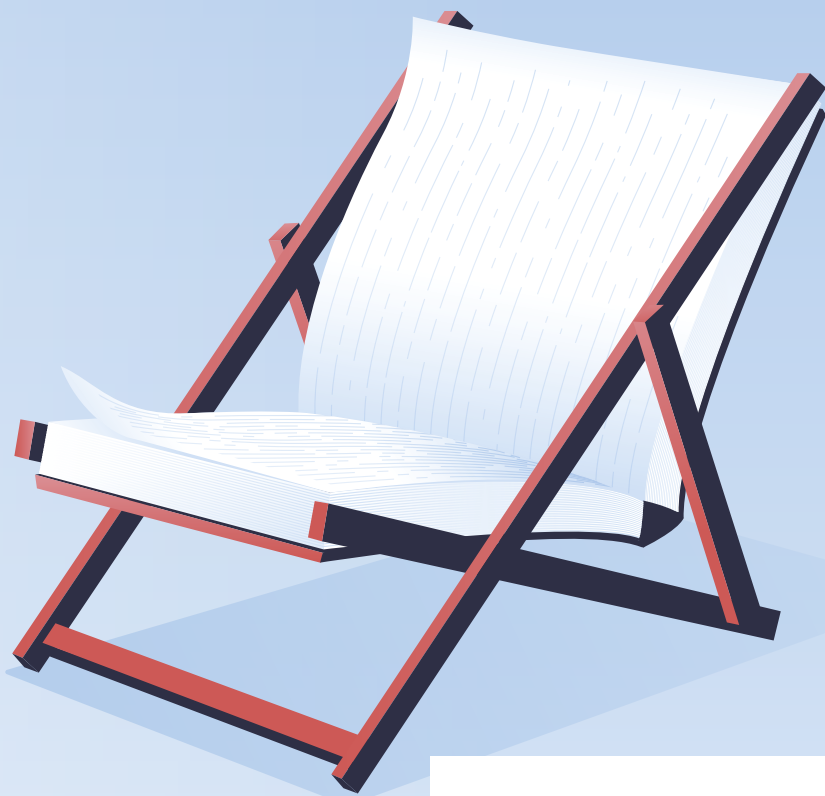
By David Robson

This book is about how our mindset and beliefs around things like health, ageing or stress can influence how we see the world and actual outcomes, and therefore we have far more control over our lives than we think.

Midnight Library

By Matt Haig

This is a beautiful exploration of the many paths life can take, and what might happen if you could relive them all. It's science fiction, but deeply relatable, and one that makes you reflect long after you've read it.



Oliver True,
Senior Multi Asset Analyst

Circe

by Madeline Miller

This is a highly character-driven story of the daughter of Helios, as she struggles to gain agency in her life. It takes a unique approach to Greek mythological storytelling, recounting the story of a minor character's journey to independence.

Hyperion

By Dan Simmons

This book takes in horror, tragedy, romance and theology. It follows seven characters as they approach a violent and quasi divine entity, each with a unique and sometimes haunting story for their purpose on the pilgrimage.

The Restraint of Beasts

By Magnus Mills

When introduced to this book, I was told 'it's just about two people building fences'. Despite the unappealing blurb, this Booker Prize nominated book is carried by deadpan humour and rising absurdity.

Helen Loveless,
Head of Content

Middlemarch

By George Eliot

A classic I've been meaning to read for decades, this is the story of life, politics, and social mores set in a fictional east Anglian town. It has been described as a 'novel of failure and realism' –it doesn't have the happy endings.

The Master and Marguerita

By Mikhail Bulgakov

This will be a reread but it's one of the funniest, most surreal satirical novels I've ever read. It's about a writer in the Soviet Union who encounters Satan when the devil comes to Moscow with a retinue of fantastical characters including a talking cat. It satirises tyranny, religion and the corruption of the elite. Written in secret by Bulgakov during Stalin's reign, it's a powerful read.

Vigil

By George Saunders

This novel about death, morality and forgiveness focuses on a wealthy oil executive who has played a key role in denying climate change while contributing to the destruction of the planet through his actions. He is on his deathbed (and unrepentant) but is surrounded by ghosts who challenge him on his life choices.

Robin Ellis, Director of
Portfolio Management

Our Dollar, Your Problem

By Kenneth Rogoff

Rogoff's take on the future of the US dollar and the global monetary system feels timely given today's fiscal and geopolitical backdrop. I'm interested in his combination of economic history and forward-looking analysis, and how he frames the longer-term risks and transitions markets may be facing.

Money

By David McWilliams

This has been recommended to me by loads of people, including my dad. I'm looking forward to a story-driven exploration of how money actually works and how economic systems shape everyday life, policy and behaviour.

Will Leicester,
Head of Brand and Design

Die With Zero

By Bill Perkins

I'm told this is the concept of making the most out of the time you get because you can't take it with you. But, more than that, spend what you have while you can, to get the most out of life. I'm looking forward to finding out more.

Map of Bones

By Kate Mosse

This is book four in the Joubert Family Chronicles series that follows generations of the Joubert women through 16th and 17th century France and beyond. The stories are set against the backdrop of religious wars, exile, and resistance. They explore faith, survival, and the strength of these women across centuries.

Unruly

By David Mitchell

Recommended by my wife, this is a narrated view of English monarchs from Arthur to Elizabeth I by David Mitchell. I am looking forward to a funny and irreverent take on British history. ♦

Looking ahead...

Q3

22–23 July

The European Central Bank (ECB) meets to set interest rates. Even before the outbreak of war, the eurozone was facing a challenging environment. A rise of 0.25% is expected soon.



28–29 July

The Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meets to set US interest rates. With US inflation rising sharply due to the Iran war, new chair Kevin Warsh must maintain the Fed's independence, while addressing President Trump's calls for lower rates. A 0.25% hike in interest rates is possible this year.

30 July

Bank of England (BoE) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on interest rates. A weak economy and the prospect that inflation will strengthen over the summer puts the BoE in a difficult position. Markets expect the BoE to make at least two 0.25% interest rate hikes this year.

27–29 August

The Jackson Hole Economic Policy Symposium is the most important annual gathering for global central bankers. It is closely monitored by investors and analysts, primarily looking for clues about where interest rates are heading.



9–17 September

September – The FOMC, ECB and MPC hold interest rate setting meetings.



Q4

No date announced

While no official date has yet been announced for the Autumn Budget, it typically takes place in late October or November. All eyes will be on Chancellor Rachel Reeves as she strives to balance the books, reduce public borrowing and keep the public happy.



3 November

US mid-term elections are held and with President Trump's approval ratings falling, could the Democrats win control of the House?

5 November

MPC monthly meeting.

8–17 December

The FOMC, ECB and MPC hold interest rate setting meetings.

30 December

Deadline to submit online return to pay self assessment bill through tax code.



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