

# Great expectations: Exploring the promises of gender equality<sup>[1]</sup>

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**Format:** Report

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## AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf<sup>[2]</sup>

## Description:

Through this report, we aim to explore changes in women's aspirations and expectations over time and from generation to generation, and to spark debate about the priorities for the next era of gender politics.

'We need a gender politics that is less about how women can succeed in a man's game, and more about how to change the rules of the game.'

The analysis in this report draws on the 1958 National Child Development Study, the 1970 British Cohort Study and the 2011 Understanding Society household panel survey to explore trends in gender relations and paid and unpaid work. We also conducted a combination of group and individual semi-structured interviews with 50 women across 16 families across the UK, to explore their aspirations, expectations, attitudes and experiences around education and work, relationships and care, and the portrayal of women in everyday culture. These women's personal accounts provide compelling illustrations of the experiences of women today and the changes in British society over the last half century.

The report concludes that 'break-the-glass-ceiling' approaches have come to dominate mainstream debates about gender equality, and have led to a narrow focus on formal, legal equality. While important in seeking to combat the discrimination and sexist attitudes that still exists, this kind of approach is limited in its ability to bring about change in most people's lives. A more meaningful approach to gender politics requires a move away from abstract debates about how the 'average woman' fares compared to the 'average man', and towards a set of policies and changes that are rooted in and relevant to the daily experiences of women.

These findings and recommendations focus on:

- women in paid work - where, for example, more high-quality, better paid part-time jobs are required to address flexibility at the lower end of the market and the concerns of older women
- caring responsibilities in the home - where a more progressive system of parental leave and affordable and accessible childcare provision would allow men and women alike to balance work and caring demands and aspirations
- women in culture - where a healthier representation of women needs to move beyond totemic 'women who've made it' and focus instead on breaking down stereotypes that affect many more women in a wide variety of roles and situations.

**Region:** Europe<sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** gender<sup>[4]</sup>

mother's labour force participation<sup>[5]</sup>

inequality<sup>[6]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/13/06/great-expectations-exploring-promises-gender-equality>

## Links

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