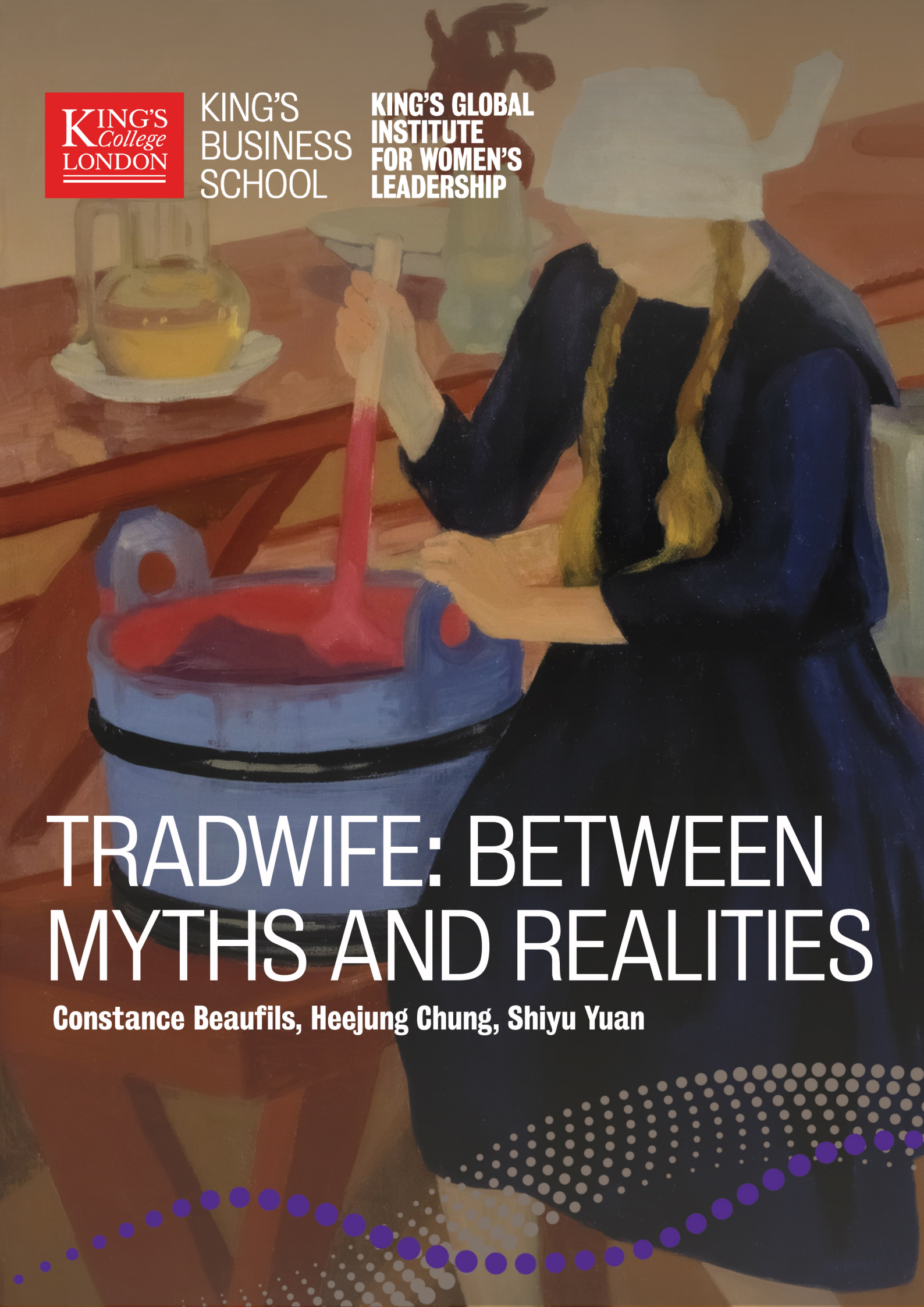




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TRADWIFE: BETWEEN MYTHS AND REALITIES

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A report produced by the Global Institute for Women's
Leadership, King's College London

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FOREWORD



The Hon Julia Gillard AC, 27th Prime Minister of Australia and Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership, King's College London

At the King's Global Institute for Women's Leadership, we spent years examining the barriers that prevent women from achieving leadership positions and the forces that seek to undermine gender equality. This report arrives at a critical moment, cutting through the noise of social media trends to reveal what young women actually think and what they truly need.

The 'tradwife' phenomenon has captured headlines and sparked concern. When algorithms amplify aestheticised images of domestic life, beautifully plated homemade meals, children in pristine cotton dresses, calm mornings on sprawling farms, all apparently made possible by having a male breadwinner and a wife who is at home full time, it's easy to worry that we're witnessing a retreat from the hard-won progress of recent decades. Are young women really turning away from careers and independence? Are we facing a new generation embracing traditional gender roles?

The answer, as this rigorous research demonstrates, is a resounding no.

What this report reveals is far more nuanced and, frankly, more concerning than a simple return to the past. Young women aren't rejecting equality, rather, they're exhausted by inequality. They're not nostalgic for male breadwinner models, they're burned out by a system that demands they excel in paid work while still shouldering the bulk of unpaid care and domestic labour. When young women find the aesthetic of tradwife content appealing, they're responding to the promise of calm in a world that offers them relentless pressure instead.

This matters because it's not really about tradwives at all. It's about work cultures that remain fundamentally incompatible with caregiving responsibilities. It's about childcare costs that make employment barely worthwhile for many families. It's about the persistence of the 'ideal worker' myth that expects total devotion to paid work, as if children raise themselves and homes clean themselves. It's about young people—both women and men—increasingly recognising that something is deeply wrong with how we've structured work and family life.

The evidence in this report is unequivocal. Young women hold progressive attitudes toward gender equality. They reject the idea of male decision-makers and female submission. They want both parents contributing to household income and both parents involved in care. Yet, they also want meaningful work and time with their families. These aren't contradictory desires, but reasonable expectations that our current systems fail to meet.

But here's what should alarm us: when systems fail people, they become vulnerable to solutions that promise relief, even if those solutions come wrapped in ideology that threatens their autonomy and rights. As this research shows, tradwife content doesn't just offer recipes and decorating tips. It can serve as a gateway to more extreme views about women's place in society. The aesthetics are a lure. The danger is what lies beneath.

This is why evidence matters. This is why research like this report is essential. We cannot address the genuine frustrations driving young people toward regressive ideals if we don't first understand what those frustrations actually are. And we cannot protect gender equality if we dismiss the appeal of tradwife content as simple nostalgia or a frivolous interest.



The solution isn't to lecture young women about feminism or to shame them for finding calm, domestic imagery appealing. The solution is to build societies where work is genuinely flexible, where care is genuinely shared, where both parents can be present for their children without sacrificing their careers, and where women aren't forced to choose between financial independence and mental health.

Progress toward gender equality is never linear and never guaranteed. Every gain must be defended. Every generation must renew the fight. But I also learned that change happens when we combine rigorous evidence with political will, when we name the problems clearly and build coalitions to solve them.

This report does exactly that. It doesn't offer platitudes or panic. It offers data, analysis, and a clear-eyed assessment of where we stand. It shows us that young women haven't given up on equality, but they're telling us, loudly, that the bargain they've been offered isn't good enough.

Now we must listen. And then we must act.

Julia Gillard



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tradwife, namely a married woman who embraces traditional gender roles, has recently entered the English lexicon. This is due to the rise in the number of social media influencers sharing content on the value of staying at home to spend time cooking, cleaning and rearing children. Surprisingly, it is largely younger women who are following this social media trend. Given the recent media attention surrounding the trend, it might appear that a growing number of young women are embracing a re-traditionalisation of gender roles, favouring men as the sole breadwinners and decision-makers in the household, while restricting women's roles to those of full-time homemakers.

However, our research paints a more nuanced picture. Drawing on primary survey data of 1000 women aged 18–34, alongside analysis of large-scale secondary datasets on gender attitudes and labour market trends, we find little evidence of a return to traditional gender norms. Instead, both young women and men continue to hold broadly progressive attitudes toward gender equality, despite growing frustration with modern work and family pressures.

- **Negative views of tradwife content and its societal impact:** Exploring this issue through the collection of primary data from young women aged 18–34, we find that they are generally not supportive of the tradwife phenomenon, nor do they wish to adopt such lifestyles. Only about one out of five of the young women surveyed found tradwife content to be positive. Fifty-nine per cent felt that tradwife content has a negative impact on society, with about 11 per cent finding it very harmful. Less than 8% said they would definitely adopt a tradwife lifestyle.
- **Calm, relaxed leisure, visual lifestyles are what appeals to young women:** Many found the aesthetics of tradwives as well as the relaxed leisure lifestyle presented in these videos appealing. Even those who did not approve of tradwife content found these elements appealing. For example, 79% of women were attracted to the calm, relaxed lifestyles of tradwives; 62% to the luxurious lifestyles depicted in tradwife content; and 59% to traditional cooking and childcare styles. Others found the visual appearance of tradwives (48%) and off-grid lifestyles (39%) appealing.
- **Little support for submission or traditional gender roles as depicted in tradwife content:** Women, however, did not find the traditional division of labour and power depicted in the tradwife content appealing. This is especially true with regards to the emphasis on men as decision makers (7%), and women as main/sole caregivers (16%). Only a small proportion of women are attracted to the idea of having large families (17%).
- **Ambiguity around breadwinning roles and work:** The proportion of women who found the idea of men doing most of the breadwinning appealing was slightly higher (32%), as was the proportion who found the idea of not worrying about a career appealing (44%). This suggests that, while young women generally reject the traditional division of labour, some want to escape the pressures of paid work. As the secondary data shows, this attitude towards work is shared by both young men and women.
- **Gender role attitudes remain or are becoming more progressive:** Examining two of the largest secondary data sets available on issues of gender role attitudes – namely the British Social Attitude Survey from 1989 to 2022 and the Gender and Generations Survey of 2022 – we find that, rather than a re-traditionalisation of gender roles, younger men and women increasingly endorse more egalitarian views. Within any given year, younger age groups hold more progressive attitudes than older groups. For example, in 2022, only 12% of men and



17% of women aged 18–34 believed that a preschool child was likely to suffer if her/his mother works, compared with 26% of men and 39% of women aged 75 and older. Looking at long-term trends, we see that younger cohorts are also equally or more progressive than older cohorts at the same age. For example, support for gender equality in economic roles has increased steadily among both genders. Among 18–34-year-olds, the proportion endorsing the view that both men and women should contribute equally to household income has risen from 49% among men and 46% among women in 1989 to 80% among men and 70% among women in 2022.

- **Growing trends towards a more equal division of unpaid and paid work responsibilities:** We also examined behavioural data from the UK Labour Force Survey and the UK Time Use Survey to explore how parent's division of paid and unpaid labour has evolved in recent decades. We show that women's employment rate is higher than ever. The dominant household arrangement is now dual full-time employment, with over 50% of working parents both employed full-time. Moreover, fathers have increased their participation in childcare: while they spent an average of 47 minutes on childcare activities in 2014, this rose to 55 minutes in 2022 — reducing the gender gap somewhat after it peaked at around 89 minutes during lockdown.
- **An increasing rejection of current work norms among younger cohorts of women:** We show that younger cohorts of women increasingly perceive paid work as detrimental to health. For example, in 2022, nearly one in five young women (20%) and men (21%) aged 18–34 believed that paid work negatively affects mental health, compared to 10% of those in older age groups. This proportion has been rising: before 2020, fewer than 10% considered paid work to be harmful to mental health. There is also a strong preference for reduced working hours among younger cohorts: young women suggest that mothers of two-year-olds should work 27 hours per week — below the current average of 30 hours — while young men propose that fathers work 32 hours, which is well under the 40-hour norm and the lowest across all male age groups.

In conclusion, rather than a nostalgia around the role of women being limited to household labour, the popularity of the tradwife phenomenon may be a symptom of the systemic strain experienced by the younger population, especially parents, who are juggling increasingly demanding jobs with intensive parenting responsibilities. We have seen a growth in the number of young women moving away from marriage and childbirth globally as a response to such pressures. Recent trends also show that women may view retreating into traditional domestic roles as the only viable escape from overwork in order to preserve their mental health and well-being. Such a trend risks reversing progress in gender equality, with serious repercussions for women's autonomy and power within households. Furthermore, this could feed into broader political currents where nostalgic and restrictive notions of family life are used to support agendas that pose a threat to society.



INTRODUCTION

The tradwife movement has gained significant traction on social media, with influencers amassing millions of followers by vividly portraying traditional domestic lifestyles. It has been reported that Google Trends data shows searches for tradwife have been rising across Europe, North America and beyond over the past five years¹. The phenomenon and its popularity have increased so much to the point that in 2025, the Cambridge English Dictionary has officially included tradwife as one of the new words in the English language². One of the most well-known influencers is Hannah Neeleman, the "tradwife queen"³ behind the Instagram account *Ballerinafarm*, which has over 10.2 million followers. In her videos, the 35-year-old Hannah Neeleman showcases a homesteading lifestyle living in her 328-acre farm in remote US, with her husband, eight children and various farm animals. Recent posts⁴ include scenes of her making homemade feta cheese from the milk she just milked herself, making lunch from the crops she grows in her farm with her daughters, who are often dressed in white cotton dresses and aprons. These visuals evoke a nostalgic and idealised vision of a more traditional femininity and motherhood, mixed with vintage off-grid cottage core lifestyle.

This resonates with a broader cultural moment where, in recent times, we are witnessing a backlash against modern feminism, with a significant number of people feeling that giving women equal rights has gone too far⁵. For example, our 2025 International Women's Day (IWD) Survey (Ipsos UK & GIWL, 2025) shows that 42% of the respondents in the UK believed that giving women equal rights has gone too far, to the point we are discriminating against men, with 69% of young Gen Z men believing this to be the case. Much of the debate, thus far, has been focused on gender polarisation, where young men and women are diverging not only in their political stances (Campbell et al., 2024), but also in the way they view gender roles. What has received less attention is an exploration of the extent to which certain young women may also be adopting more traditional perspectives with regard to gender role attitudes. In fact, taking a closer look at our IWD survey, we found that a third of all young UK female respondents also felt that giving women equal rights has gone too far. This, alongside the rise in interest in tradwives on social media⁶, may feel to many like there has been a potential growth in the number of young women moving more towards a conservative view of the world and gender roles, with some embracing traditional ideals of femininity and domesticity as a counter-narrative to feminist progress.

The question arises: Are we witnessing a trend of movement back towards traditional family and work values among younger generations? Is the popularity of tradwife content a sign that they are reverting to the traditional gender roles of male breadwinner and family decision maker, and female caregiver in a more subservient role? Do we discern a comparable tendency for this, especially among younger women? If there is a rising appeal towards the tradwife social media trend, then which elements of this trend are appealing to young women? Is it the traditional gender roles, the aesthetic and looks of

¹ [Les Glorieuses – Tradwife & the Far-Right Pipeline](#)

² [Cambridge University Press – Cambridge Dictionary adds “skibidi”, “delulu”, and “tradwife”](#)

³ [The Times – Meet the Queen of the Tradwives and Her Eight Children](#)

⁴ [Instagram – Ballerina Farm Reels](#) (accessed 30 September 2025)

⁵ Response to the question “When it comes to giving women equal rights with men, things have gone far enough in my country.”

⁶ For example, the Guardian had at least five feature articles, The Times close to a dozen, tradwife feature articles in the last couple of years.



tradwives, or perhaps the affluent, leisure-filled lifestyle in an age of increased work-life strain and financial insecurity?

In this report, we answer these questions in three ways. Firstly, we explore young women's attitudes towards the tradwife social media phenomenon through a survey of 1,000 young women between 18 and 34 years of age. Next, we explore the actual patterns of how young people and couples divide labour and engage in the labour market using large-scale data such as from the UK Labour Force Survey and UK Time Use Surveys. Finally, we analyse large-scale secondary attitudinal data sets to examine the opinions of the British population regarding gender roles and attitudes towards work and work-life balance, drawing on multiple waves of the British Social Attitudes Survey (1984–2022, N $\approx$ 1,675–6,699 per year) and the UK Gender and Generations Survey II (2023, N = 7,875). Through this, we aim to present a more accurate picture of gender role attitudes of younger populations in Britain, disentangling them from the myths that are portrayed through media headlines and the assumed rise of tradwives.



EXPLORING THE TRADWIFE PHENOMENON: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a tradwife, short for traditional wife, as “*a married woman, especially one who posts on social media, who stays at home doing cooking, cleaning, etc. and has children that she takes care of.*” The rise of tradwife content has indeed been largely led by the very strong social media presence of influencers presenting a homemakers’ life, providing cooking or childcare content, focusing on women’s well-being whilst also promoting a type of tradwife lifestyle. Some of the key names includes Hannah Neeleman (aka @Ballerinafarm) with more than 10.4 million followers on Instagram and Nara Smith (aka @naraazizasmith) with more than 12 million followers on TikTok, with many of her videos raking more than 60 million views.

Defining characteristics of this tradwife phenomenon⁷ go beyond the portrayal of a traditional gender division of labour, in which women are solely or mainly responsible for childcare and housework, while men are the sole earners. The content also often passes moral judgment on how to cook (from scratch)⁸, raise children (without using store-brought items or using traditional crafts activities)⁹, and run a household (using all organic and more “traditional methods”). Much of the tradwife content also glorifies large families, perpetuating pronatalist views, with influencers boasting about having multiple children in quick succession. For example, Hannah Neelam, who is 35, currently has eight children, with rumours of a ninth pregnancy; Nara Smith, who is 23, has four children. Though not always explicit, many influencers use religious traditions¹⁰ to advocate for a family hierarchy that places men at the helm and women in a secondary, subservient role.

The portrayed tradwife lifestyle is far removed from the picture sociological research paints of economically inactive mothers. Indeed, ethnographic and statistical studies show that mothers who are out of the labour force experience lives marked by a heavy load of unpaid labour, a demanding daily pace, and social devaluation (Beaufils 2024). These conditions are often accompanied by economic insecurity and poor health, as they are among the groups with the poorest overall health status and lowest levels of income in later life (Lacey et al. 2016, 2017; Dotti Sani and Luppi 2021). What is more, it is important to consider what a woman’s financial dependence to men as sole or main breadwinners would imply in practice. Sociological and economic research has long demonstrated the importance of independent income for autonomy and decision-making power within households (Pahl, 1991; Vogler & Pahl, 1994). Women who lack financial independence tend to have reduced bargaining power and, in many cases, face increased vulnerability to domestic violence (Aizer, 2010), a phenomenon rooted in patriarchal family structures that normalise male authority and female subordination (Pahl, 2007). Moreover, income contribution is closely tied to the division of labour and household authority: those contributing less financially often undertake a greater share of unpaid

⁷ [The Times – Meet the Queen of the Tradwives and Her Eight Children](#) ; [The New York Times – Ballerina Farm’s Hannah Neeleman on Fame, Family, and Food](#)

⁸ [Eater – Tradwife Trend: Ballerina Farm, Housework, and Home Cooking](#)

⁹ [Christian Research Institute – How Traditional Are Tradwives? Evaluating the Social Media Movement](#)

¹⁰ Both Nara Smith and Hannah Neeleman come from Mormon communities with some speculating that their content is designed to promote the values of the church. See: [The Times – Meet the Queen of the Tradwives and Her Eight Children](#) ; [Rolling Stone – Nara Smith, Lucky Blue Smith, and the TikTok Tradwife Phenomenon](#)



care and domestic work, reinforcing gendered hierarchies in both economic and family lives (Brines, 1994; Syrda, 2023).

Moreover, mothers' economic inactivity often reflects less genuine adherence to traditional values than the difficulty of reconciling family responsibilities with professional roles in a labor market whose norms remain poorly adapted to caregiving constraints. In her book *For the Family? How Class and Gender Shape Women's Work* (2011), Sarah Damaske interviewed nearly 80 women from diverse social backgrounds about their employment trajectories following childbirth. While all those who left the labour force framed their decision as being “for their family”—a reflection of dominant norms of good motherhood that encourage women to present their choices as selfless and child-oriented—Damaske's in-depth interviews reveal that these exits were frequently shaped by structural constraints: job insecurity, difficult working conditions, inflexible workplace organization, or the absence of a support network to assist with childcare. Crucially, these constraints are exacerbated in a context of reduced welfare support, employment protection, and family policies, as is the case in liberal regimes such as that of the United Kingdom or the United States (Mandel and Shalev 2009). Interestingly, these constraints also seem to be at the root of the economic inactivity of some tradwife influencers. Indeed, in a study by Stotzer and Nelson (2025), many of those interviewed stated that becoming a tradwife was for practical, financial, and logistical reasons rather than because of a belief system. One of them declared, “We couldn't afford a nanny, personal chef, chauffeur, or housekeeper”.

In fact, this isn't the first time that a resurgence of the traditional housewife model has been proposed. In her 2007 book *Opting Out?: Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home*, Pamela Stone questioned why highly qualified women in the United States, who had often studied at top US universities and held high-status professional jobs, were quitting in the early 2000-2010s. While the media coverage at the time attributed this exodus to a resurgence of popularity of the housewife model, Stone showed that these women were leaving the workforce due to difficulties in successfully balancing family and work obligations.

The challenges in balancing competing professional and family demands have been exacerbated by two phenomena. Firstly, we have seen the rise of intensive parenting norms (Hays, 1998), which increase the amount of time parents, particularly mothers, are expected to devote themselves to enrichment activities for their children (Damaske 2013; Craig et al. 2014). Studies have shown that the time parents spend on enrichment care, that is, time spent with children actively engaging with them – i.e., reading, playing, etc. – has risen rather than decreased over the past decades (Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016). This rise is especially true for highly educated women who are not only increasing the number of hours they spend in paid employment but also providing childcare (Wishart et al., 2019). These heightened expectations, however, are not matched by a corresponding redistribution of unpaid domestic labour shared by male partners, nor by changes in workplace norms that would allow parents to better meet family responsibilities (Chung, 2022). We have seen the rise of greedy jobs (Goldin, 2014), namely a work culture that expects employees to show full devotion to work (Blair-Loy, 2009), where workers are expected to work as if they have no other responsibilities outside of work. Prevailing workplace ideals such as the “ideal worker” norm, combined with the persistence of flexibility stigma, continue to penalise women who seek to reconcile care obligations with paid employment (Chung, 2020). For many tradwives on social media, the “choice” to stay at home focusing on the domestic household labour may have been determined more by the religious culture and norms of the Christian church. For many others, however, economic inactivity may be the result of a system that fails to let women “have it all”, but instead puts women under increasing pressure, without sufficient support neither coming from the domestic sphere (from their male partners) nor



the public sphere (from employers with access to family-friendly policies or the state for example cheap affordable childcare or laws to restrict long hours work), leaving little option but to quit.

This dynamic resonates with Nancy Fraser's (2016) analysis of capitalism's inherent contradictions. Fraser argues that capitalism depends on 'social reproduction': the unpaid work devoted to sustaining and renewing human life and social systems across generations, including activities such as childbearing and childrearing, caregiving for dependents, household labor, and the maintenance of social and community ties. She argues that while fundamental, our current-day society systematically seeks to hide and undervalue this labour. In the latest stage of capitalism, this contradiction is exacerbated: although women have entered the workforce in large numbers, the burden of care remains largely on them.

This mismatch intensifies what Fraser calls the "crisis of care", where the demands of capitalist production clash with the necessity of sustaining life, creating tensions that women disproportionately bear as they navigate increased family responsibilities alongside inflexible labor market conditions. In this sense, some could argue that what tradwife content provides an opportunity to shed light on the importance and value of the unpaid care work women carry out in the household. By promoting a more visible acknowledgment of domestic labour, it can be read as a reaction to the systemic devaluation of reproductive work within capitalist economies. Yet, rather than challenging the unequal distribution of care or addressing the structural roots of the crisis of care, the tradwife ideal can reinforce the idea of domestic labour as women's natural duty, presenting an essentialist and nostalgic solution to contemporary tensions. The reality is, however, that this solution is both undesirable and untenable, especially given the cost-of-living crisis, where for most, both parents engaging in full-time employment is the only way to ensure financial stability for the family. In fact, tradwife content is full of contradictions. While many influencers promote the value of staying at home and emphasise women's place in the private rather than the public sphere of paid work, they often use these very platforms to generate significant income. For example, Hannah Neeleman has launched her own line of branded protein powders in addition to an estimated half a million dollars she earns from her social media account. Similarly, sources claim that Nara Smith generates close to a quarter million dollars yearly, and more recently, she has collaborated with a clothing company to release her own designs using her online celebrity status ¹¹certain ideological stances or lifestyles for financial gain in today's late-stage capitalism.

Finally, it is important to note the concerns raised about tradwife content and its potential connections to more extreme right-wing ideas, where appropriation of domesticity goes beyond the promotion of gender roles to encompass broader political projects. At first glance, the tradwife phenomenon appears harmless, with many social media users following these accounts for home décor ideas, recipes, or fashion inspiration. However, many have noted that this seemingly benign aesthetic can mask or promote something far more insidious. Recent research has shown that behind the diversity of the tradwife aesthetic, tradwife influencers act as vectors for anti-feminist values (Stotzer and Nelson 2025), reproducing colonialist narratives and modes of oppression based on gender, ethnicity, and class (Bower, 2024). Others have linked the tradwife movement to earlier historical notions of domestic femininity, where traditional domestic imagery is promoted to support a more extremist ideology. For example, Matei (2025) observes how many of the ways in which women's domestic roles are promoted by Christian and conservative groups in recent years mirror those of authoritarian

¹¹ See also this piece: [Glamour UK – The Millionaire Tradwives Movement](#)



governments of the past. She argues that throughout history, authoritarian movements, such as Nazi Germany with its slogan for women “*Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (*children, kitchen, church*)”, amplified the message that a woman’s rightful place is at home with her children, particularly during times of chaos and instability. This concern is shared by many others¹² who fear that the idealisation of domesticity conceals a political project. One that lures young women in with seemingly harmless content, only to draw them towards more extremist, far-right, or nationalist ideologies, which ultimately seek to curtail women’s autonomy and reinforce patriarchal authority. Moreover, it is also one that draws women away from collectivist approaches to problems into individualised solutions, which may result in more support for the retrenchment of welfare state policies.

Therefore, it is crucial to gain a better understanding of the gender norms and expectations that may shed light on the apparent popularity of the tradwife phenomenon. We need more robust evidence of what young women actually believe and what makes this content appealing to them, as well as what draws them towards this lifestyle — if there is a true appeal. Through this analysis, we aim not only to explore the gender role attitudes of young women, but also to better understand the constraints that lead them to choose such roles. This insight is particularly important, as this allure can sometimes lead to troubling and potentially harmful outcomes for young women and society as a whole.

¹² Rolling Stones raised concerns with regards to the Tradwife content aiming to convert women into Mormonism: [Rolling Stone – Nara Smith, Lucky Blue Smith, and the TikTok Tradwife Phenomenon](#) ; Les Glorieuses raised concerns around Tradwife content being linked with far right political views : <https://lesglorieuses.fr/tradwife-far-right-pipeline/>; The Times has likened the tradwife content similar to methods used to groom Isis brides: [The Times – Trad Wives: Meet the Women Radicalised into Complete Subservience to Men](#); FT talks about the political allure of tradwives : [Financial Times – The Political Allure of Tradwives](#).



TRADWIFE SURVEY

HOW YOUNG WOMEN FEEL ABOUT TRADWIFE CONTENT

In September 2025, we conducted a survey drawing on a sample of 1,000 women aged 18–34 from a popular online survey platform, Prolific Academic, to explore the extent to which women were aware of Tradwife content and how they felt about the phenomenon. Of these, 930 passed the quality check. Their detailed demographic characteristics can be found in Appendix Table A1. Approximately 70% of the 930 respondents were at least moderately familiar with tradwife content. All respondents were given a definition of 'tradwives', and those who were not at all or not very familiar with tradwife social media content were given the opportunity to view a video representing such content. We investigated women's perceptions of the tradwife trend, focusing on three key dimensions.

- Overall evaluation of tradwife lifestyle: “*How do you personally feel about the tradwife lifestyle?*”
- Perceived implication of tradwife for society: “*What do you think is the overall impact of tradwife content on social media on society as a whole?*” Specifically, whether it is beneficial or harmful for society.
- Intention of individuals to adopt such a lifestyle in the future: “*Could you see yourself adopting aspects of the tradwife lifestyle (e.g., staying at home, prioritising domestic roles) at some point in your life?*”. Note that we intentionally did not specify exactly which elements of the tradwife lifestyle we were referring to, leaving it to the respondents to decide which elements they might adopt.

As shown in Figure 1, we can see a clear pattern that the majority of women aged 18 to 34 hold somewhat negative views towards tradwife lifestyles. In particular, half of the women surveyed perceived tradwife content as negative, with more than one in eight viewing it as very negative, whereas only about one in five found it somewhat or very positive. When it comes to the societal implications of tradwife content, views are even more critical: 59% of respondents reported that tradwife content had a negative impact on society, with around 11% finding it very harmful. Furthermore, when asked if they would personally adopt a tradwife lifestyle in the future, the majority of respondents rejected this idea, whereas fewer than 8% said they definitely would. That said, a further 22% said they might adopt some aspects of tradwife lifestyles.

This shows that while a small minority of women aged 18–34 hold relatively positive views towards tradwife, it remains far from mainstream. Notably, those who were not familiar with the term tended to be more open to it, whereas those who knew more about it tended to reject the lifestyle and be more critical of its implications for themselves and society. For example, around 73% of women who were extremely familiar with the tradwife trend thought it had a negative impact on society, and around 60% said they would not adopt the lifestyle in the future (Appendix Table A2). Conversely, among those who were not at all familiar with the tradwife content, only around 35% thought it had negative consequences on society, and only around 46% rejected the lifestyle. It is possible that people unfamiliar with tradwife social media content and the links between such content and broader political or social movements simply imagine it as promoting family values or prioritising home life,

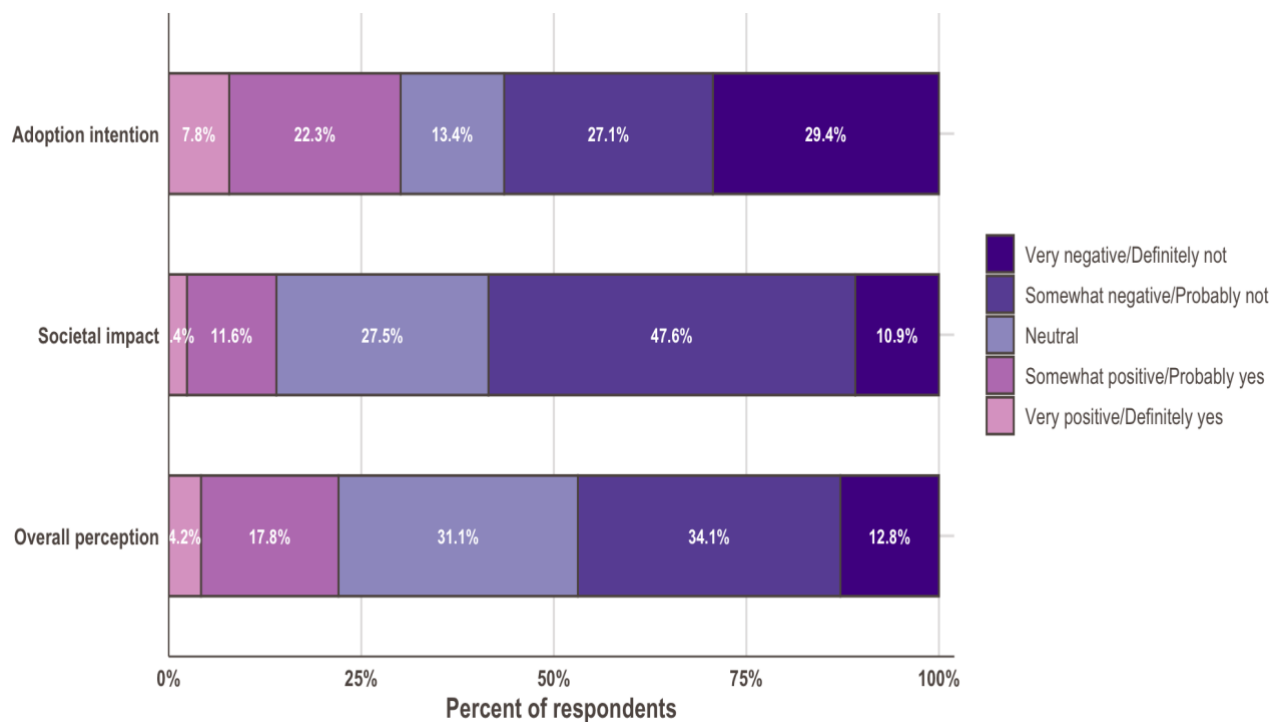


or as being more about neutral homemaking or fashion content, which may be seen as harmless. However, as they gain a greater understanding, young women may develop a clearer sense of its implications and become more negative in their attitudes. In other words, the positive attitudes observed in the data may not represent genuine endorsement of tradwife lifestyles, but rather a lack of awareness of what they actually entail. This is confirmed by our regression analysis (see Appendix Table A5), which indicates that awareness of tradwife content is negatively associated with support for it.

Breaking it down by age group in Figure 2, we can see that it is especially young women aged 18–24 who hold more negative views towards tradwife content (Figure 3 and Appendix Table A3). For example, only 16% of 18–24-year-old women viewed tradwife content positively, compared to 26% of 25–34-year-old women. Similarly, 25% of women aged 18–24 said they would adopt tradwife lifestyles, compared to 33% of those aged 25–34. However, these differences in perception by age group seem to be more related to other characteristics, such as religiosity, political affiliations, and marital/cohabitation status. When these factors are considered, age no longer has any significance. Looking at other characteristics (see Appendix Tables A3 and A5), it was mainly women who were heterosexual, religious (compared to non-religious people), politically conservative, and with children who reported a more positive perception of the societal implications of tradwife content on social media. These groups, as well as those who were married or cohabiting and ethnic minority respondents, were also more likely to express a willingness to adopt a tradwife lifestyle in the future. Interestingly, education and class did not make a significant difference, especially when other factors were considered.

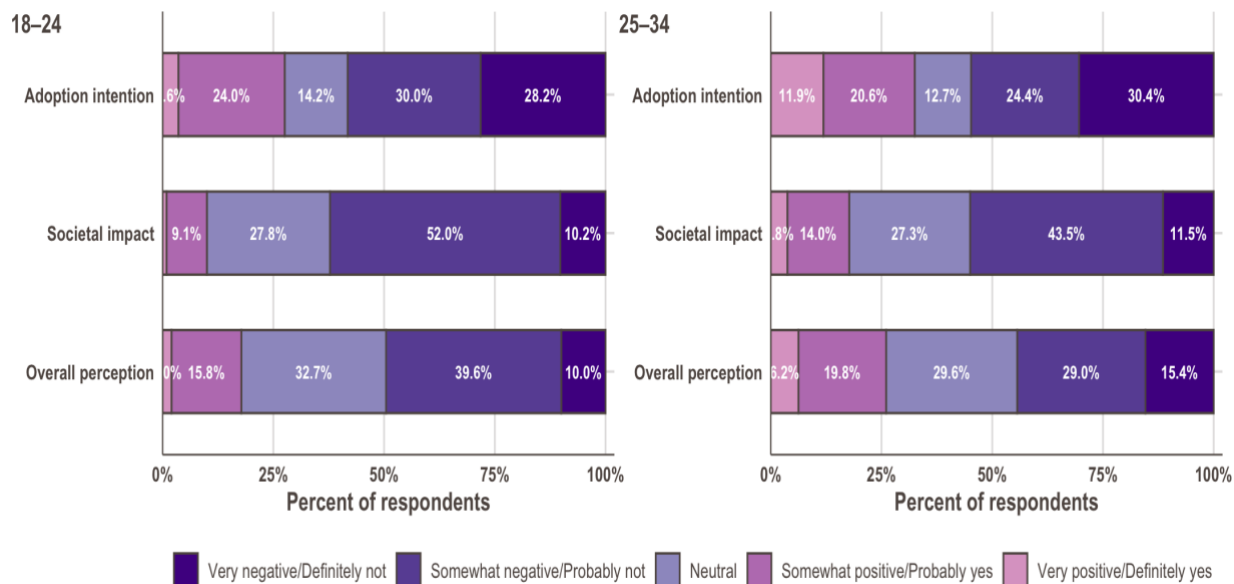
In sum, there is no evidence that most young women support the tradwife lifestyle with many believing it has a negative impact on society. Again, the younger generation of women were more likely to feel this way. A greater number of women believed that they would adopt certain aspects of the tradwife lifestyle in their lives. However, this may be less about wanting to adopt such behaviours and more about having no choice but to do so – e.g., dropping out of the labour market to become a stay-at-home mother – due to the constraints that mothers face in the UK labour market (Costa Dias et al., 2018; McRae, 2003; Tomlinson, 2006). The next section explores in greater detail exactly which elements of tradwife content young women find appealing.

Figure 1. Perception of tradwife among women aged 18-34 in the UK.



Note: Data are based on a primary survey on women aged 18-34 residing in the UK (N=930).

Figure 2. Perception of tradwife among women, by age group.



Note: Data are based on a primary survey on women aged 18-34 residing in the UK (N=930).



THE APPEAL OF TRADWIFE CONTENT

To better understand what elements of tradwife lifestyles young women approve or disapprove of, we asked the following question:

“Below are some traits often shown in tradwife content. For each one, please say how appealing or unappealing you personally find it”

The respondents were then given the following aspects¹³ – where they can respond by saying “very unappealing” to “very appealing” on a 5-scale point. They were also able to choose the response “I do not associate this with tradwives”.

- *Men as the main or sole breadwinners*
- *Women mainly or solely responsible for housework and childcare*
- *Not having to work in paid employment or worry about building a career*
- *Men as the main decision makers in the family*
- *Having many children/a big family as a goal*
- *Traditional style of cooking and childcare (e.g. baking bread, homemade meals)*
- *“Off-grid” lifestyles (avoid shop-bought or mass-produced items)*
- *A relaxed, calm, low-stress lifestyle*
- *Vintage clothing, home décor, and other visual styles*
- *Luxurious lifestyle/affluence*

Figure 3 shows that the most appealing aspect of tradwife is the promise of a calmer, low-stress way of living. Almost eight in ten women (79%) rated this aspect as appealing, making it by far the most attractive element – although a good proportion of women (14%) also did not associate this with tradwives. The majority of women also found the luxurious lifestyle (62%) and traditional cooking and childcare style (59%) of tradwives appealing – although again about one out of ten women did not associate affluent lifestyles with tradwives. The visual appearance of tradwives (48%) and off-grid lifestyles (39%) were also aspects of tradwives that young women found appealing.

By contrast, traits of tradwives related more to traditional/patriarchal family models, such as big family sizes, female caregiving, and male-dominant decision-making roles, were much less appealing to women. For example, unsurprisingly, only 7% of women found the idea of men making all the decisions in the household appealing, with 84% finding it unappealing – and very few people relating this to tradwives. Similarly, only 16% of women found the idea of women being mainly or solely responsible for housework and childcare appealing, and only around 18% of women found the idea of having a large family appealing.

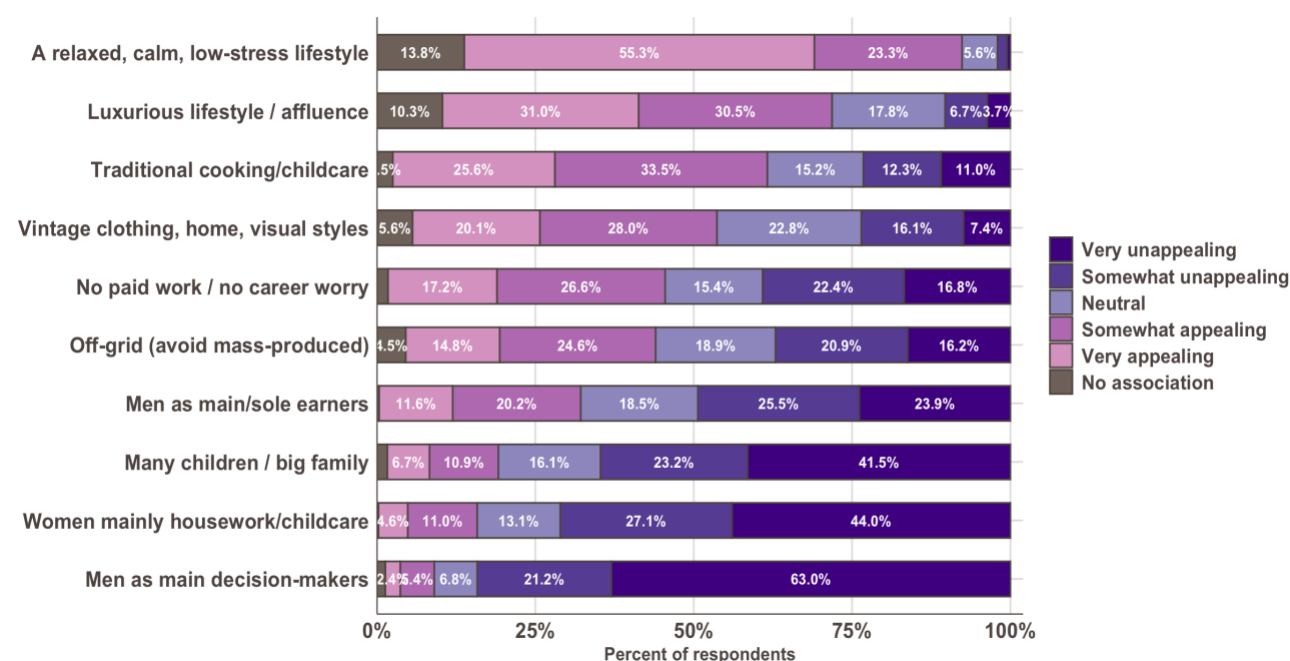
The picture becomes more complex when we consider the traits of tradwife content regarding breadwinning and women’s employment. Although 32% of respondents found the idea of men as the sole or main breadwinner somewhat appealing, a larger proportion (half of all respondents) found it unappealing. Similarly, 44% of respondents found the idea of not having to worry about work or their career appealing, a figure similar to those who found it unappealing. This proportion is significantly

¹³ These themes were drawn from numerous new media reports of tradwives and viewing the tradwife video contents ourselves.

higher than that of young women in the BSA survey who agreed with the statements, “A man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family” and “A job is all right, but what women want is a home and children”, which we will explore in the next sections.

Based on this, rather than viewing this response as a reflection of women's reluctance to engage in the labour market, we interpret it as an indication of the strain that women experience when trying to balance the demands of paid and unpaid work. At the same time, while the appeal of the tradwife lifestyle may reflect a desire for a better work–life balance, this very ambivalence about managing paid and unpaid work can lead some women to view dependence on a male breadwinner as an appealing option, especially under existing gender norms and welfare systems.

Figure 3. How appealing women found different aspects of the tradwife lifestyle



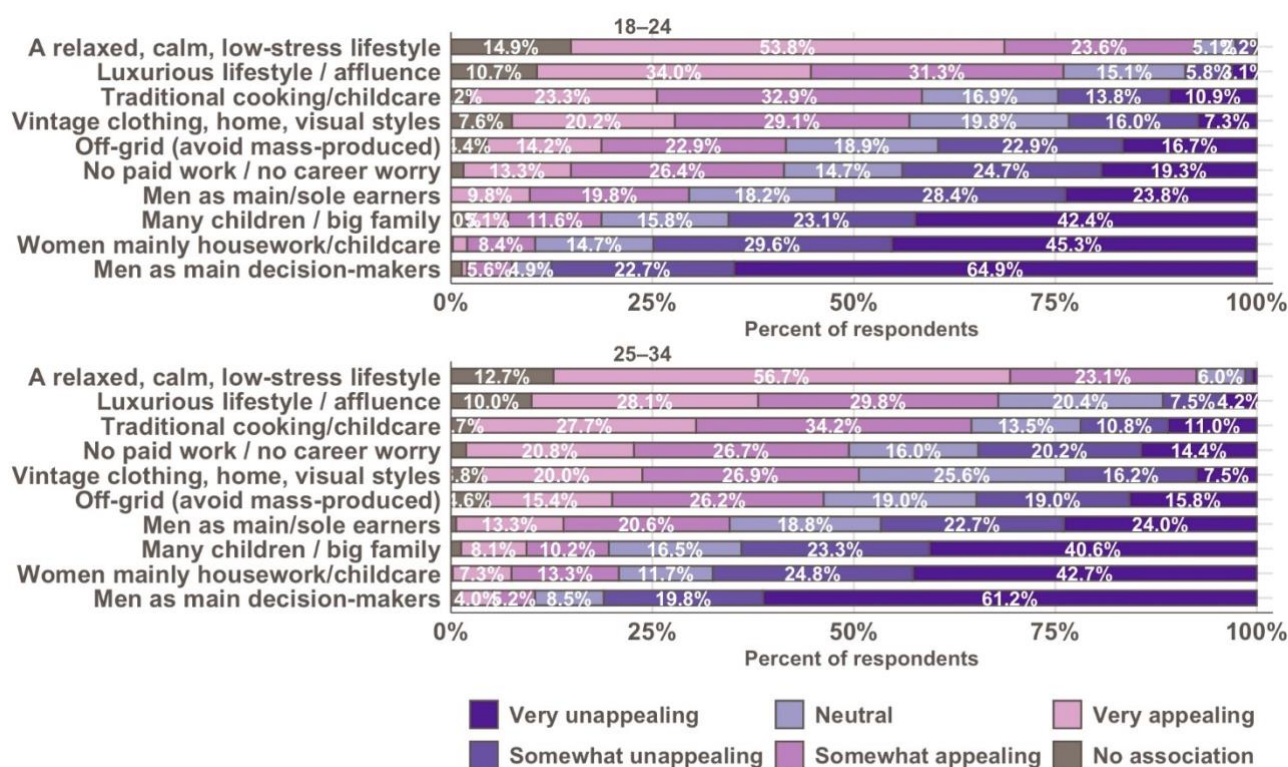
Notes: Bars show the proportion of women who rated each element as very appealing, somewhat appealing, neutral, somewhat unappealing, or very unappealing. Responses are based on the question: “Below are some traits often shown in tradwife content. For each one, please say how appealing or unappealing you personally find it.” Data are based on primary survey on women aged 18–34 residing in the UK (N=930).

When examining age group differences (Figure 4), we found that younger women aged 18–24 were particularly likely to reject ideas associated with traditional gender roles. Among this group, elements related to traditional gender and family values were viewed as especially unappealing: only 9% found the idea of women being mainly or solely responsible for housework or childcare appealing, compared to 21% of women aged 25–34, and fewer than 30% of 18–24-year-olds viewed the male breadwinner aspect of the tradwife ideal positively, compared to 34% among 25–34-year-olds (Figure 4). Conversely, traits such as luxurious lifestyles were more popular among 18–24-year-olds (65%) than among those aged 25–34 (58%). However, as we found in the previous section regarding positive and negative views of tradwives, the true distinctions lie not in age group, but in life stage.

To explore this further, we ran a regression analysis (Appendix Table A5) to examine which socio-demographic characteristics are associated with finding certain elements of the tradwife lifestyle more appealing. When other factors are considered, age does not explain why certain individuals find the idea of women being mainly or solely responsible for housework and childcare appealing. Rather, life-

course stages — such as being married or cohabiting and having children — are more important than age. Similarly, when looking at those who find the male breadwinner aspect appealing, the largest differences are observed by sexuality (heterosexual women being more supportive), ethnicity (ethnic minority respondents being more supportive), religion (those with a religion being more supportive), education (higher-educated respondents being less supportive), class (working-class respondents being more supportive), and, most notably, political affiliation (progressive-minded individuals being less supportive).

Figure 4. How appealing women found different aspects of the tradwife lifestyle, by age group

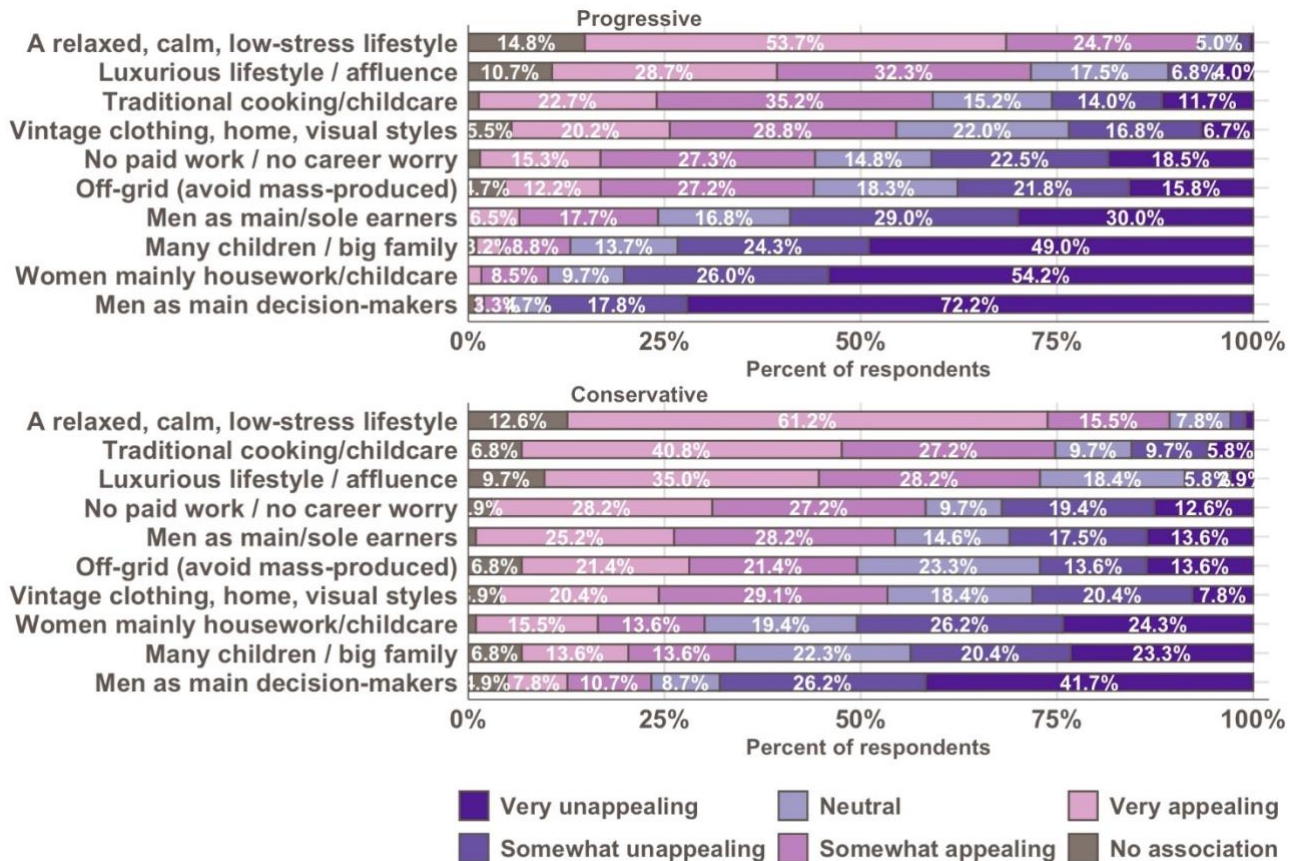


Notes: Bars show the proportion of women who find each element very appealing, appealing, neutral, unappealing, or very unappealing. Data are based on primary survey on women aged 18-34 residing in the UK (N=930).

In fact, and unsurprisingly, distinct patterns emerge when we distinguish women according to their political preferences (Figure 5). First of all, it is important to note that the majority (65%) of women in our survey identify as progressive, with smaller shares describing themselves as moderate (24%) or conservative (11%). Comparing these groups reveals that political preferences are closely aligned with attitudes toward the tradwife movement and the specific elements respondents find appealing. As shown in Appendix Table A2, women who identify as politically right or conservative tend to hold more positive views of tradwives than those on the left or progressive side. That said, even among right-leaning or conservative respondents, around 36% expressed negative views of tradwife content, and about 30% believed it has a negative impact on society (Appendix Table A2). Next, when examining how the appeal of tradwife content varies across political lines, gender roles emerge as the most divisive dimension. Over half (53%) of women identifying as conservative found the idea of men as the main or sole breadwinner appealing, compared to only 24% of progressive or left-leaning women. Likewise, fewer than one in ten progressive women found the model of women as the main

or sole caregiver appealing, whereas this figure rose to nearly one in three among conservative respondents. Similar patterns were observed in relation to attitudes toward men's decision-making power and the ideal of having a large family. Importantly, the influence of political orientation remained significant even after accounting for other individual characteristics that may shape how women perceive different aspects of the tradwife lifestyle (Appendix Table A5).

Figure 5. How appealing they found different aspects of the tradwife lifestyle, by political preference



Notes: Bars show the proportion of women who find each element very appealing, appealing, neutral, unappealing, or very unappealing. Data are based on primary survey on women aged 18-34 residing in the UK (N=930).

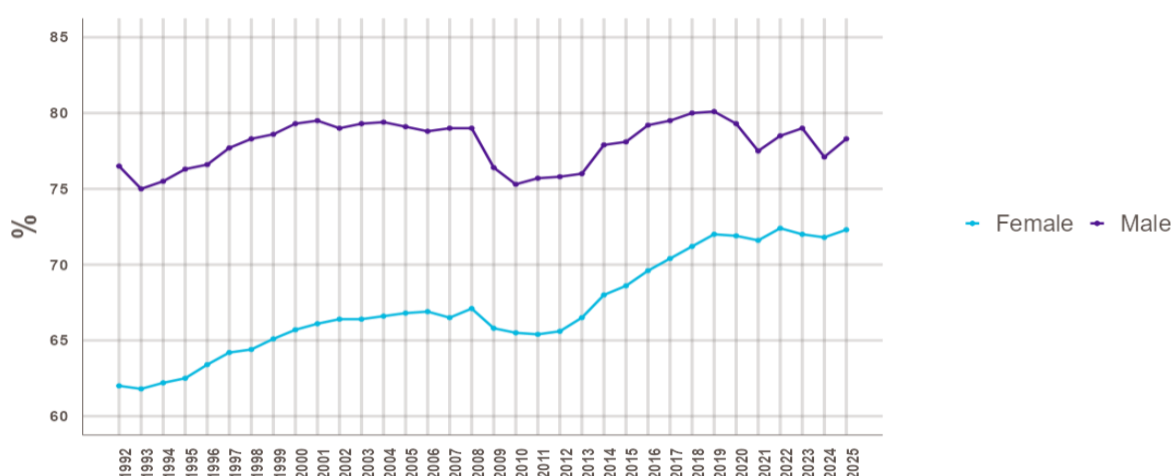
SECONDARY DATA ON BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER ROLES AND WORK

TRENDS IN THE DIVISION OF PAID AND UNPAID LABOUR

Long-term labour force data enable us to examine whether a return to more traditional gender roles can be observed in population behaviour, and to explore how attitudes reflect reality. Using data from the Office for National Statistics, derived from the UK Labour Force Surveys, we describe the evolution of women's employment rates, working hours, as well as couples' work arrangements over the last decades. We demonstrate that, despite the popularity of the tradwife aesthetic, which promotes a return to traditional models of female homemakers and male breadwinners, this arrangement has never been the norm in recent decades in the UK and is becoming even less so.

Figure 6 shows the change in employment rates for men and women aged 16–64 between 1992 and 2021. It reveals a clear upward trend in women's labour force participation, which began in the second half of the 20th century and has persisted in recent decades. Indeed, women's employment rates rose from around 62% in 1992 to 65% in 2011 and approximately 72% in 2025, which is the highest level ever recorded (ONS, 2025). On the other hand, the male employment rate remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 75% and 80% throughout this period.

Figure 6 – Female and male employment rates between 1992 and 2025

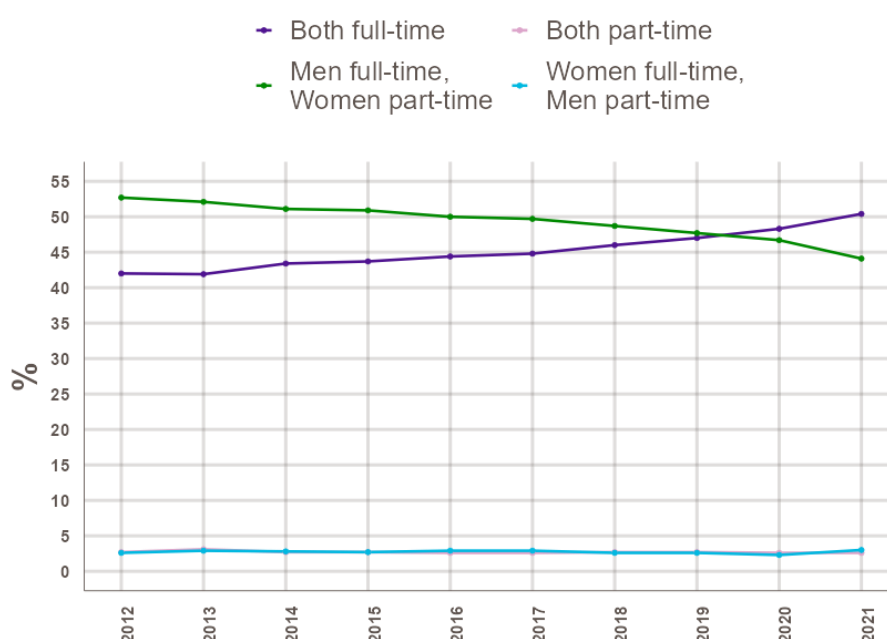


Notes: This figure includes women and men aged 16-64 and is based on March-May data for each year to adjust for seasonal variations¹⁴ Source: Office for National Statistics, derived from the UK Quarterly Labour Force Survey

¹⁴ Data are taken from the March–May quarter of each year rather than April–June as the Figure 2. This is because March–May is the most recent period currently available for 2025.

Furthermore, the most common working arrangement among parents over the last decade has shifted from a 1.5 model, where fathers work full-time and mothers work part-time, to a model where both mothers and fathers work full-time. In Figure 7, which displays the distribution of working arrangements among parents and their evolution between 2012 and 2021, we indeed observe that since 2020, the most common working arrangement among UK couples with children has been for both parents to work full-time. By April–June 2021, 50% of working couples were both employed full-time. The father full-time/mother part-time model followed with 44%, while only 23% of couples had a stay-at-home mother or father. Even before 2020, the most prevalent arrangement was for both parents to work, and stay-at-home mothers were less common. These figures highlight the ongoing trend of shared economic responsibility, contradicting the idea that the tradwife trend reflects a widespread return to traditional homemaking roles for women.

Figure 7 – Working arrangements of parents with dependent children between 2012 and 2021



Notes: This figure includes women and men aged 16-64 and is based on April-June data for each year to adjust for seasonal variations

Source: Office for National Statistics, derived from Labour Force Survey (LFS) Household datasets

The increasing labour force participation of mothers and the rise in dual-income families can be partly attributed to the growing number of women in higher education. For example, women made up 56% of all undergraduate students in 2023-2024¹⁵ and 57% of all postgraduate students in higher education, compared to the early 1980s when it was still mostly men who were obtaining degrees – with women making up only 38% of the student population¹⁶. In addition, in recent years we have seen the gender pay gap narrow¹⁷, with 18–21-year-old women on average earning more per hour

¹⁵ [HESA – Who's in Higher Education?](#)

¹⁶ [Hansard – Universities \(Statistics\), UK Parliament, 30 July 1981](#)

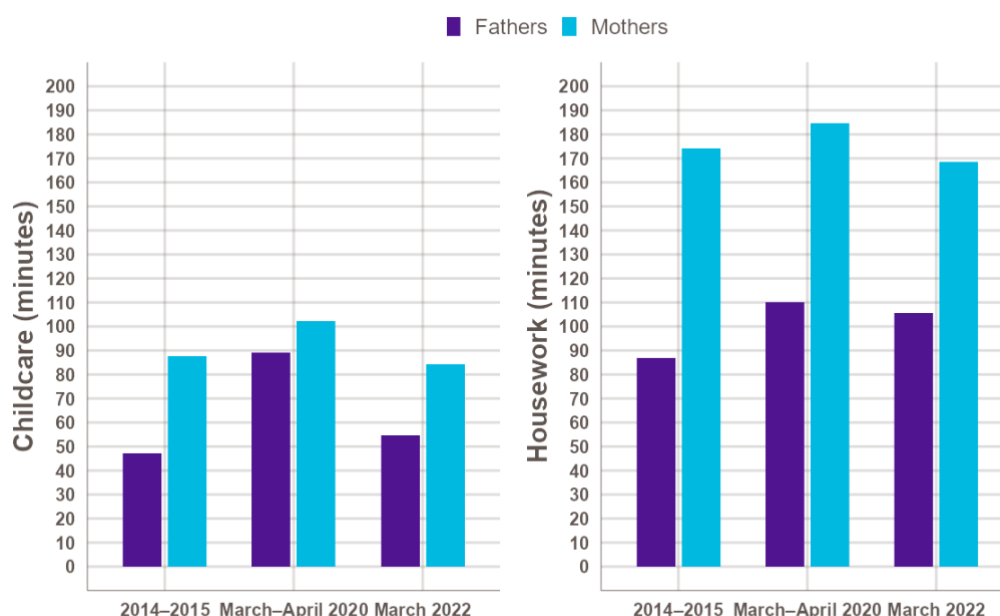
¹⁷ [Office for National Statistics – Gender Pay Gap in the UK: 2024 24](#)

compared to their male counterparts in 2024. Similarly, women are the main breadwinners in one out of four households in the UK¹⁸.

Furthermore, although women still take on most childcare and housework, recent data show a slight shift towards greater participation by men in these tasks in recent years. Figure 8 illustrates the evolution of the average daily time spent on housework and childcare between 2014–2015 and March 2022. We can see that, compared to 2014–2015, fathers' participation in childcare increased markedly during the pandemic (Chung et al., 2021; Dunatchik et al., 2021). While in 2014, they spent an average of around 47 minutes per day on childcare, this almost doubled to approximately 89 minutes during the 2020 lockdown, reducing the gender gap. Although this participation declined by March 2022, fathers were still spending on average 55 minutes on childcare per day, which is an increase from a decade ago. A similar, though more modest, trend is observed in fathers' involvement in housework: in 2014, they spent an average of around 87 minutes per day, rising to more than 100 minutes in 2020, and remaining relatively stable thereafter.

Hence, while the division of unpaid labour within households remains highly unequal and the increase in fathers' contributions is modest, the evidence suggests that the gender gap in unpaid work has been narrowing, especially during the pandemic. However, the recent decline in fathers' involvement in childcare suggests that, despite the growing preference for fathers to be more involved in childcare (Burgess & Goldman, 2021; Working Families, 2017), many of the changes observed in recent years related to remote working – with the rise of return-to-office mandates (Chung & Yuan, 2025) and increasingly demanding work cultures – may limit fathers' ability to assume a larger role in the domestic sphere.

Figure 8 - Average time (minutes) spent per day on childcare and housework for parents with dependent children between 2014 and 2022



Notes: This figure includes women and men aged 16–64. Source: Office for National Statistics, derived from UK Time Use Survey

¹⁸ [The Telegraph – Women Are Breadwinners in One in Four Couples](#)



In summary, based on data on labour force participation and division on unpaid labour, there is no clear evidence that UK households are reverting to a more traditional model. On the contrary, with the opportunities provided by the rise of flexible and remote working (Chung & Van der Horst, 2018), combined with the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis, an increasing number of families now have both parents engaged in full-time paid employment. In addition, the division of housework, particularly childcare, is becoming more evenly shared, with fathers voicing their desire to be more involved. Overall, more households appear to be adopting a progressive approach to balancing paid and unpaid work. Yet, because women continue to carry the bulk of housework and childcare, and with some adopting increasingly intensive parenting norms (Craig et al. 2014), their participation in the labour market remains particularly challenging and exposes them to significant strain. This strain is further exacerbated by the current economic and policy context, which raises concerns about women's sustained participation in paid work.

Importantly, childcare costs are very high in the UK. For a couple earning the average wage with two children aged 2 and 3, net childcare costs consume around 25% of their earnings, even after benefits aimed at reducing gross childcare expenses. This places the UK among the most expensive childcare systems in the OECD, ranking fourth after the United States, New Zealand, and Cyprus¹⁹. Such high costs reduce the net economic benefits of employment for women, especially for low-income groups. In fact, recent studies have evidenced a significant motherhood penalty in wages for mothers, where for each child, monthly wages fall by 42% or £1,051 five years post childbirth, and women are twice as likely as men to be in insecure employment²⁰. These pressures are further exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, widespread job cuts, driven both by the adoption of AI and by economic decline across many sectors, as well as companies' return-to-office mandates (Chung & Yuan, 2025). Reflecting these dynamics, recent reports indicate that a large number of women have left the labour market in countries such as the United States, which may also explain why the idea of being a tradwife is appealing to some young women²¹.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER ROLES

The British Social Attitudes Surveys provide data that enables the measurement of adherence to traditional gender roles, in which women are associated with unpaid domestic labour and men with paid employment. Since 1989, respondents have been asked whether they agree with statements about gender roles. These include:

- Beliefs about women's aspirations: *"A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children"*; *"Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay"*
- Perceptions of women's and men's financial roles: *"A man's job is to earn money, a woman's job is to look after the home and family"*; *"Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income"*
- The perceived effects of maternal employment on families and young children: *"All in all, the family suffers when the woman has a full-time job"*; *"A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works"*

¹⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD – Net Childcare Costs \(2025\)](#)

²⁰ [The Work Foundation – New Motherhood Penalty Figures Show Stark and Unfair Reality for Working Mothers in the UK](#)

²¹ [Bloomberg – Women Turn Away from Labour as They Lose Faith in the Economy](#)



These statements allow us to explore the multidimensionality of gender role attitudes (Grunow et al., 2018; Knight & Brinton, 2017), as people may have different perceptions of men's and women's roles in contributing financially to the household and of mothers' roles in caring for children. The latter is also shaped by the social and policy context, including the availability of high-quality state-provided childcare and generous paternity leave schemes that encourage men to get involved in childcare. In such contexts, family life and preschool children are less likely to be impacted, as other resources are available to take care of children, such as childcare facilities or fathers' involvement.

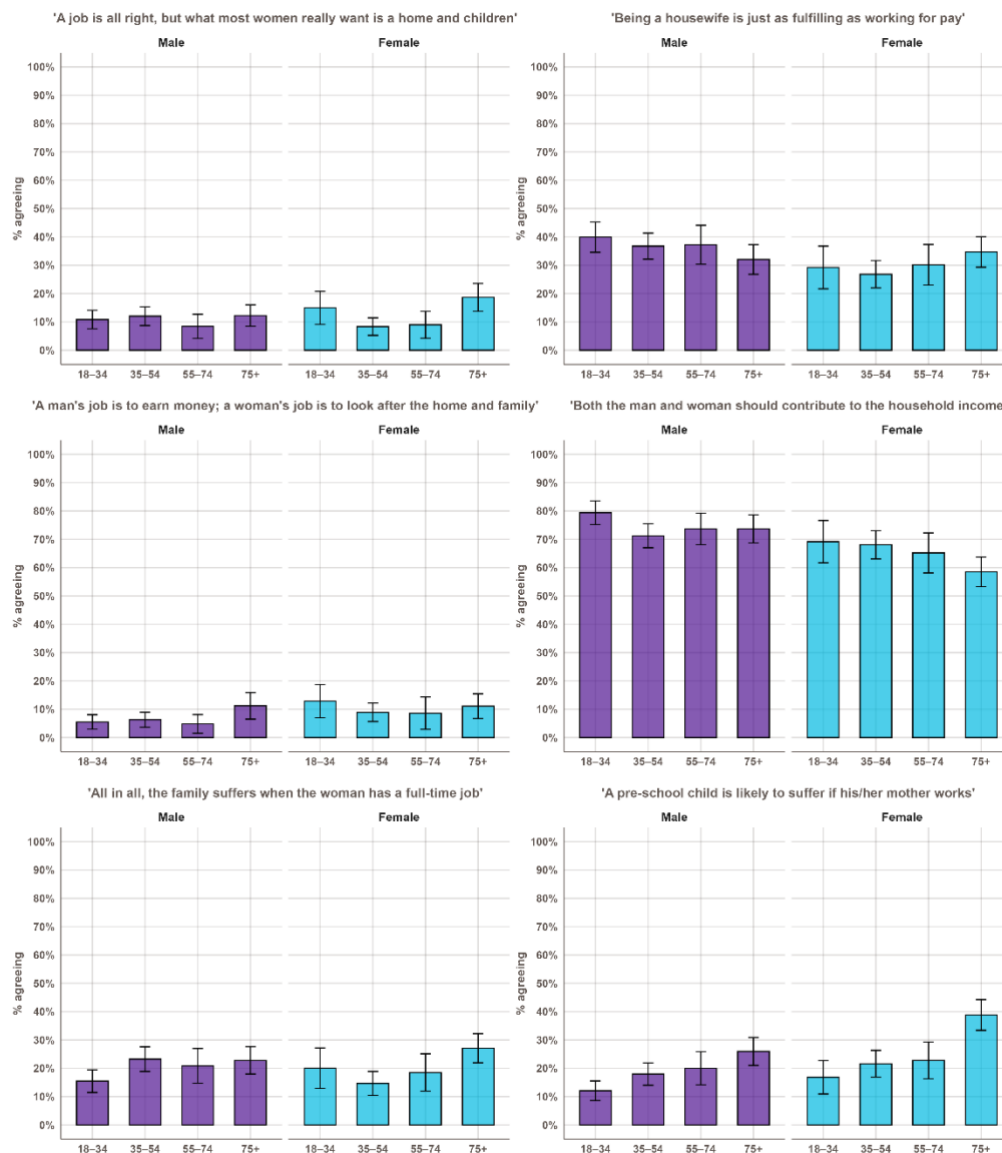
Figure 9 presents the proportion of individuals agreeing with gender role statements, by gender and age group, in 2022. Figure 10 displays the evolution of those proportions from 1989 to 2022. All questions are posed so that the lower level of agreement equates to a more egalitarian view of gender roles, other than the fourth panel, which is the proportion of workers who agree to “both men and women should contribute to household income”, where a higher agreement is considered to be more egalitarian or progressive.

Examining 2022 data in Figure 9, we see that only a minority of men and women across all age groups support traditional gender roles. Only between 5% and 12% of respondents agree that a man's job is to earn money and a woman's job is to look after the home and family. Egalitarian beliefs towards economic roles are also widespread, with slightly more men than women who endorse the idea that both partners should contribute to household income, ranging from 71% of men aged 35–54 to 80% of men aged 18–34, compared with 59% of women aged 75+ to 69% of women aged 18–34. Conversely, a higher proportion of women than men agree that a job is alright, but what most women want is a home and children, with this view held by around 8% of women aged 35–54 and roughly 19% of women aged 75+, compared with around 10% of men across all age groups. For the former, this may reflect the gender pay gap and the dual demands of paid and unpaid work faced by women, particularly among those with caring responsibilities. For the latter, it may indicate women's recognition of the value of caregiving and other unpaid domestic roles compared to men. It may also reflect that men find it more difficult to express what “women want”. Nevertheless, women most likely to be mothers with dependent children—those aged 35–54, the group most relevant to this question—generally disagree with this view, with only 8% in agreement.

Younger men and women generally hold more egalitarian beliefs than older generations, particularly compared with respondents aged 75 and above. For example, only 12% of men and 17% of women aged 18–34 believe that a preschool child is likely to suffer if the mother works, compared with 26% of men and 39% of women aged 75 and older. Similarly, 15% of men and 20% of women aged 18–34 agree that the family suffers when mothers work full-time, compared with 22% of men and 27% of women aged 75 and older. Support for the notion that both men and women should contribute to household income is higher among younger respondents (80% of men and 70% of women aged 18–34) than among the oldest group (73% of men and 59% of women aged 75+).

By contrast, generational differences are smaller for beliefs about the relative value of being a housewife or prioritising home and children over paid work. Younger women (18–34) are somewhat more likely than middle-aged women (35–74) to endorse traditional views on these items, particularly regarding the preference for home and children. This may reflect greater recognition by young women of the broader contributions women make through unpaid labour, as well as their perceptions of paid work. These differences, however, are not statistically significant.

Figure 9 - Proportion of individuals agreeing with gender role statements by age group and gender



Source: British Social Attitude survey 2022

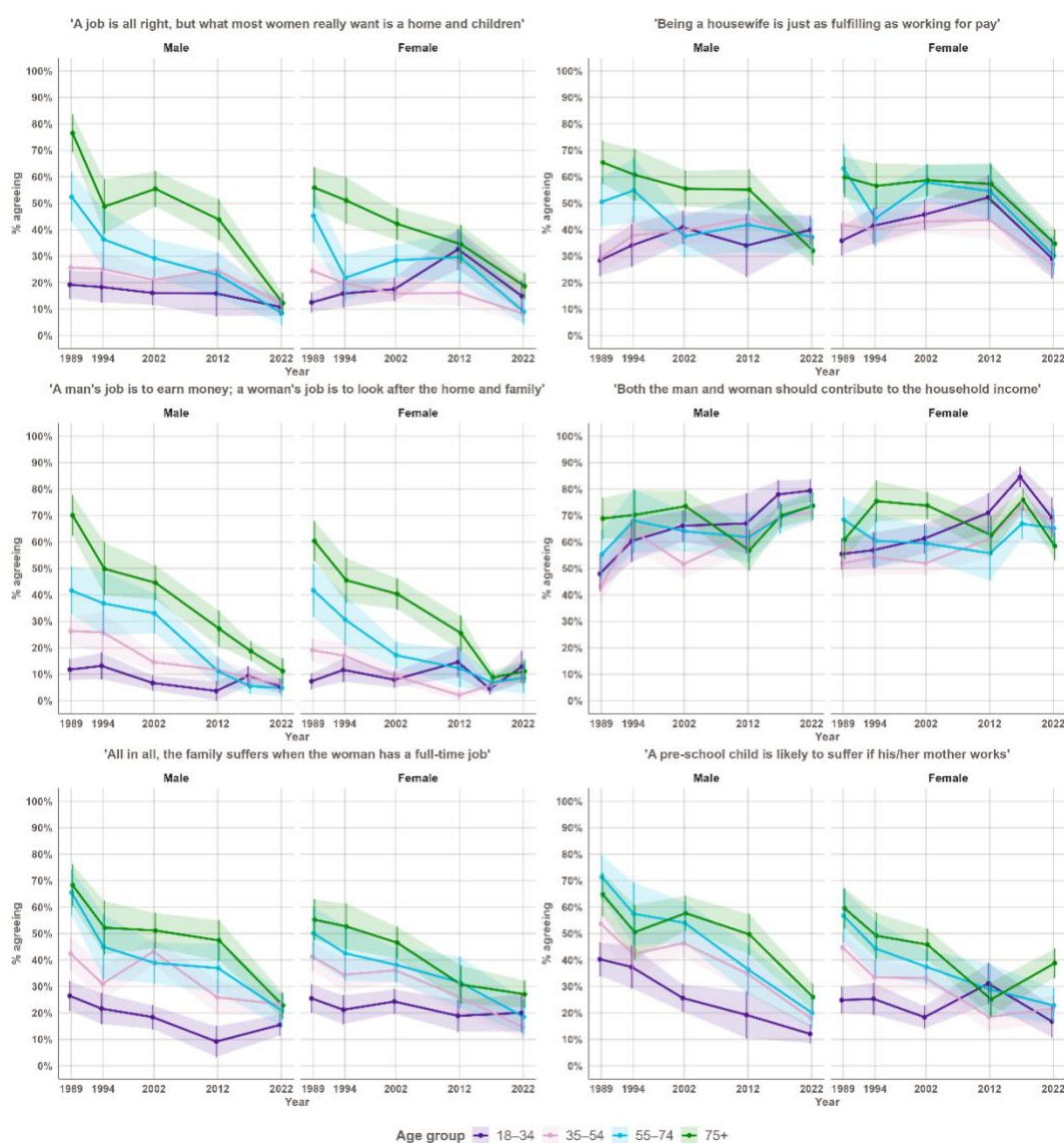
Examining the evolution of agreement to these statements between 1989 and 2022 in Figure 10, we can see that support for traditional gender roles has declined steadily over this period for both men and women, especially among older cohorts (75+), leading to a convergence of gender-role attitudes across age groups. In 1989, for example, 70% of men over 75 agreed that a man's job is to earn money while a woman's role is to look after the home, compared with 41% among men aged 35–54 and 12% among men aged 18–34. By 2002, these figures had narrowed to 45%, 35% and 7%, respectively, and by 2022, the differences were minimal, with only about one out of ten individuals feeling this way. Similar trends are observed for other statements in the survey.

Importantly, there is no evidence that younger individuals have returned to traditional gender or family norms. Support for gender equality in economic roles increased steadily for both genders: among 18–34-year-olds, those endorsing the view that both men and women should contribute equally to household income rose from 49% in 1989 to 80% in 2022 among men and from 46% to 70% among women. Attitudes toward maternal employment also became more egalitarian, with younger men showing a sharp decline in beliefs that families or pre-school children suffer if mothers

work (from 25% in 1989 to 10% in 2022 “family suffers” and from 40% to 12% for “pre-school children suffer”). Younger women’s views around this topic remained relatively stable, in the range of 20% to 25%. Some traditional perspectives among younger women peaked temporarily around 2012, particularly the belief that what most women really want is a home and children, or, to a lesser extent, that a woman’s job is to look after the home and family and that being a housewife is fulfilling; however, these views had declined again by 2022.

Overall, these more detailed analyses confirm that both young men and women remain more egalitarian than older cohorts, with no evidence of a return to traditional family roles compared with previous generations at the same age. While some traditional attitudes may still be observed, these are likely more reflective of changes in the values young workers attach to paid and unpaid work, and the centrality of work in one’s life, rather than a preference for a more traditional division of labour between men and women. The next section provides further support for this interpretation of the data.

Figure 10. Proportion of individuals agreeing with gender role statements, by age group, gender and survey year



Source: British Social Attitude surveys (1989, 1994, 2002, 2012, 2022).



ATTITUDES TOWARDS PAID WORK AND WORK-LIFE ARTICULATION

While survey data does not indicate a resurgence of traditional gender norms among younger generations, the popularity of tradwife prompts inquiries into the resonance of such content with contemporary youth. Further analysis of the British Social Attitudes Survey and the Gender and Generations Survey indicates that this phenomenon may not be indicative of a revalorization of traditional family arrangements, but rather a form of rejection of contemporary dominant norms surrounding work, particularly the model of the "ideal worker" who prioritises professional obligations above all else (Williams, 1999).

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF PAID WORK ON HEALTH

Since 2015, the British Social Attitudes survey has included items on the perceived effects of paid work on mental and physical health. Respondents are asked the following questions:

- Impact of paid work on mental health: *"Some people think that paid work can be good or bad for a person's mental health. Taking everything into account, do you think that for most people paid work is generally good for mental health, or bad for mental health?"*
- Impact of paid work on physical health: *"Some people think that paid work can be good or bad for a person's physical health. Taking everything into account, do you think that for most people paid work is generally good for physical health, or bad for physical health?"*

These questions enable us to assess whether individuals perceive paid work primarily as a source of well-being or as a potential risk to mental and physical health.

Figure 11 shows the proportion of men and women reporting that they believe that paid work is generally bad for mental health and physical health across age groups, and their evolution between 2015 and 2022. It shows that younger age groups more often report believing that paid work is generally bad for mental health than older age groups. In 2022, almost 20% of women and 21% of men aged 18-34 believed that paid work is generally bad for mental health. In comparison, this proportion drops to less than half of this, to below 10% for women and just 6% for men aged 35-44, remaining similarly low for all age groups over 35 regardless of gender. Examining the proportion of respondents who believe that paid work is generally bad for physical health, a similar pattern emerges: 13% of young men and 12% of young women report this belief, while the figures are much lower among older age groups—for example, around 2% for both men and women aged 75 and above.

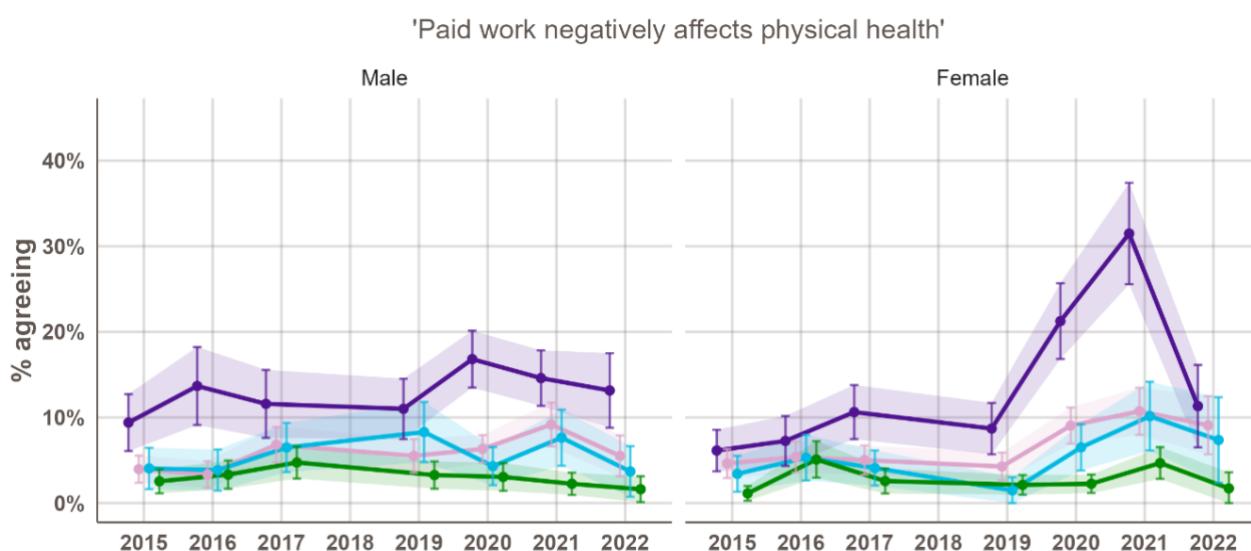
Importantly, examining how the perceptions of the impact of paid work on mental and physical health have evolved between 2015 and 2022, we observe an overall increase across all age groups of women, with peaks during the pandemic waves in 2020 and 2021, particularly among younger women. Indeed, among women aged 18-34, the share reporting that paid work negatively affects their mental and physical health rose from under 10% before the pandemic to 20% for mental health and 31% for

physical health in 2021. Similar, though more moderate, increases are observed among older women. In the prime working-age group (35–54), the proportion reporting that paid work harms mental health doubled, from 5% in 2015–2016 to 10% in 2022. Importantly, this shift cannot be attributed solely to the pandemic: among the youngest women (18–34), the proportion perceiving paid work as detrimental to mental health remained stable at 20% in 2022, following the sharp rise recorded in 2021. The trend is less pronounced among men, and perceptions of harm to physical health have increased more modestly overall.

These figures echo many recent reports of increasing mental health problems among younger generations, as well as the stress experienced by parents in paid work. For example, a recent survey of 2,000 parents found that 82% of parents in the UK show at least one warning sign of burnout²². For young people, the Mental Health UK Burnout Report 2025, based on a survey of 4,418 UK adults, finds that young people aged 18–24 are most likely to report high stress due to unpaid overtime (48%), taking on additional hours because of the increased cost of living (46%) and feeling isolated at work (44%)²³.

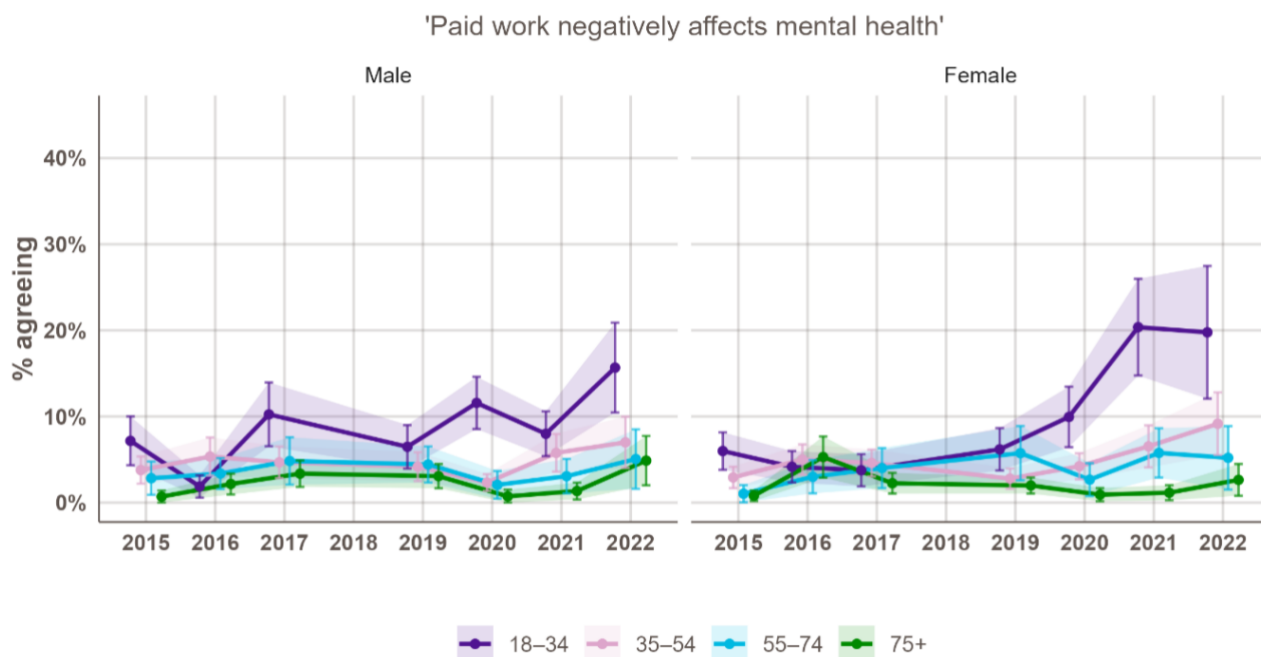
Hence, among younger cohorts, women appear increasingly ambivalent about the role of paid work in their lives, perceiving it both as a potential source of fulfilment and as a contributor to mental health strain. Importantly, this trend cannot be attributed solely to age effects: the proportion of young people expressing such concerns is substantially higher than that observed in earlier cohorts at the same stage of the life course.

Figure 11 - Proportion of individuals reporting they believe that paid work is generally bad for mental and physical health, by age group, gender and survey year



²² Action for Children – [Eight Out of Ten Parents Show Warning Signs of Parental Burnout as Families Struggle with Toll of Pandemic](#)

²³ Mental Health UK – [Burnout Report 2025 Reveals Generational Divide in Levels of Stress and Work Absence](#)



Source: British Social Attitudes Surveys (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022).

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

Data from the UK Gender and Generations Survey allow us to further investigate whether the popularity of the tradwife trend reflects a return to traditional gender role attitudes among younger populations by examining whether they perceive full-time work and motherhood as incompatible. Specifically, the second wave of the GGS provides information on the working arrangements that individuals consider “ideal” for mothers and fathers, as well as their perceptions of whether the family suffers when fathers work full-time. This enables us to move beyond abstract gender norms and examine how people believe work and care responsibilities should be balanced in practice within heterosexual couples. Such arrangements could involve, for example, a shared reduction of working hours by both mothers and fathers, or selective scaling back by one parent. Moreover, compared with the BSA, the GGS allows us to explore societal expectations regarding fathers’ involvement in both work and family life, as well as to gain a more in-depth understanding of how contemporary work arrangements are perceived as compatible or incompatible with an ideal family life. The survey specifically asks the following questions:

- Ideal working hours of mothers and fathers: “Consider a family with a mother, father, and a two-year-old child. How many hours per week should the mother work?” and “How many hours per week should the father work?”, with responses ranging between 0 and 140 hours per week.
- Problems of long-hours work of fathers: “A child is likely to suffer if his/her father spends too much time at work”

Figure 12 presents respondents’ ideal weekly working hours for mothers and fathers, by gender and age group. This provides important context for the attitudes shown in Figure 5, as people may

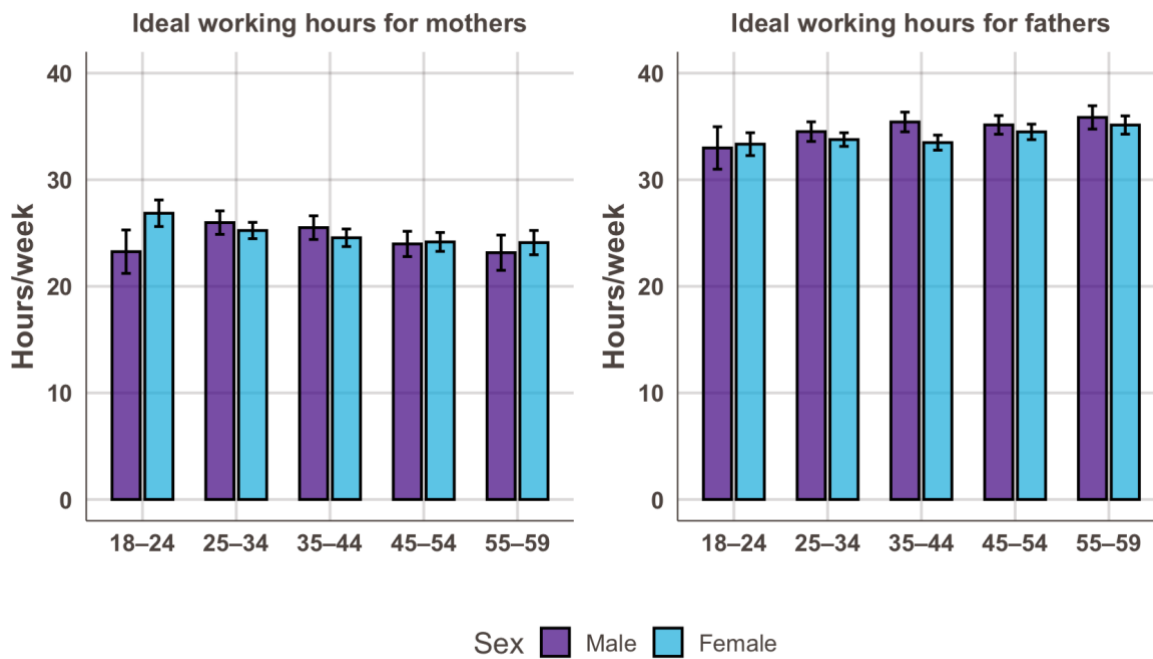


interpret “long working hours” differently. We can see that both men and women across all age groups consistently preferred mothers to work part-time, with the assumed ideal working hours for mothers ranging from around 24 to 27 hours per week (namely 3–4 days a week). Across all age groups, both men and women consistently preferred mothers to work part-time, with the assumed ideal weekly hours for mothers ranging from around 24 to 27 hours (approximately 3–4 days per week). Examining preferences across age groups, there was no indication that younger women favoured a return to traditional norms, such as a stay-at-home mother, even for very young children. For example, only 0.44% of women aged 18–24 stated that mothers should not work—the lowest proportion of any age group—compared with an age-group average of 1.38% (see Appendix Table A6). In fact, young women reported an average preferred weekly working hour of 27 for mothers, compared with 24 hours among women aged 45–59, and 22–23 hours for young men aged 18–24. In other words, younger women were, if anything, more likely to believe that mothers should be more engaged in the labour market compared to both their male peers and older female cohorts. It is also important to note that the actual average working hours of mothers with children under three is 30 hours per week—higher than the preferred hours expressed—possibly indicating a preference for reduced, but continued, paid work, particularly among younger generations compared with older ones.

The right-hand panel shows respondents’ perceptions of the ideal working hours for fathers with young children. Reflecting the current UK labour market, the reported ideal working hours for men are higher than those generally considered ideal for mothers, ranging from 32 to 36 hours per week. An interesting pattern emerges among younger respondents, particularly young men, who preferred fathers to work fewer hours. Young men indicated that fathers should work just 32 hours per week—the lowest across age groups—compared with men aged 55–59, who considered 36 hours more appropriate. Although the proportion is small, young men were also the most likely to say that fathers with a two-year-old should not work (about 2%)—the highest of any age group (see Appendix Table A7). Young women reported the second-lowest ideal working hours for fathers, at around 34 hours per week.

It is important to note that actual working hours for fathers in the UK currently average 40 hours per week, considerably higher than the ideal for all age groups. This ideal-reality gap suggests broad support for reduced working hours for fathers and potentially greater involvement at home when children are very young, particularly among younger generations. In sum, these findings indicate that younger women expect mothers to participate more actively in paid work compared with other age groups, and that both younger men and women are moving away from the traditional male breadwinner “ideal worker” model, which emphasizes long hours for fathers. Both groups appear to favour a more balanced division of paid work and family responsibilities, with no evidence that the younger generation supports a return to traditional labour allocation.

Figure 12 – Ideal working hours for mothers and fathers, by age group and gender

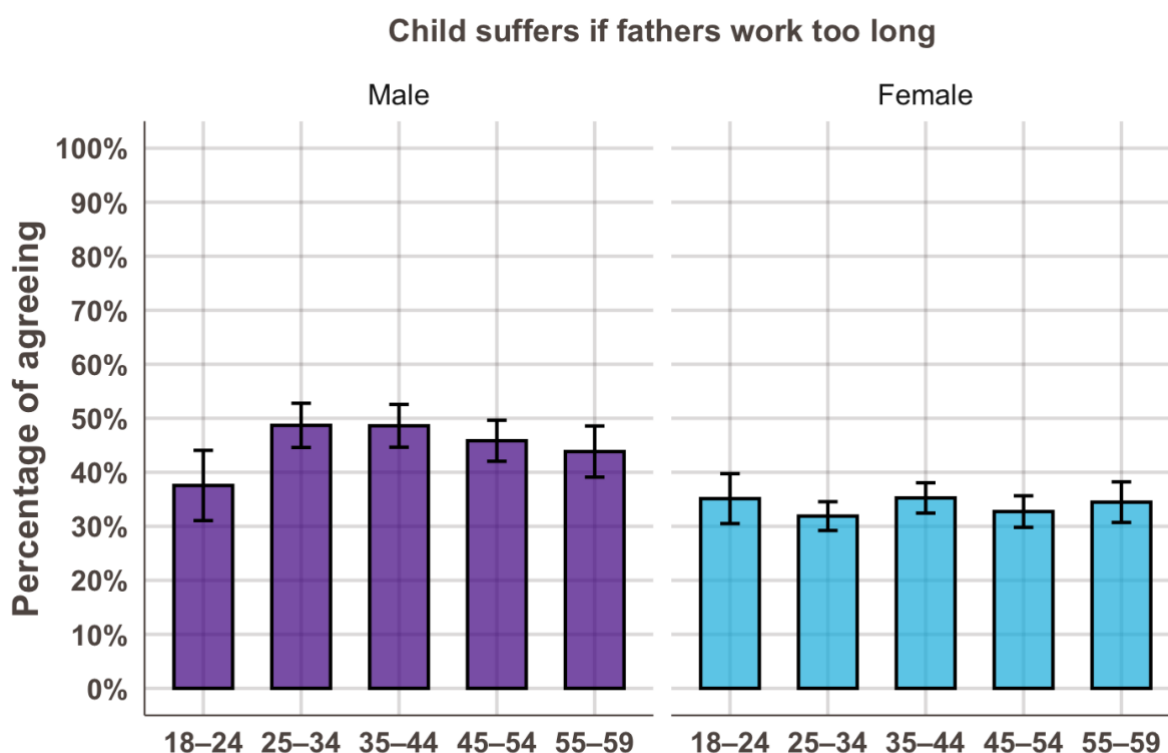


Notes: Based on a weighted sample of 3,203 British adults aged 18–59 with complete cases (excluding missing responses for these questions).
Source: Generation and Gender Survey

Figure 13 shows the proportion of individuals who agree with the statement that a child is likely to suffer if their father spends too much time at work, by gender and age group. This question allows us to examine whether norms regarding mothers’ involvement in paid work differ from those regarding fathers’, particularly among younger generations. The results can be compared with those from the previous section using the BSA, where the question focused solely on mothers, asking whether a pre-school child is likely to suffer because their mother works—an item also included in the GGS—alongside the statement on whether the family suffers if the mother works full-time.

As we can see, half of men across all age groups, and more than one-third of women, felt that fathers’ long working hours are detrimental to a child’s well-being. In fact, numerous studies have shown that not only is men’s involvement in childcare beneficial for the child(Cano et al., 2018; Chung, 2021), but it also enhances men’s own well-being (Meier et al., 2018; Roeters & Gracia, 2016; Vagni, 2022). Men were more likely than women to believe that fathers’ long working hours negatively affect family life, except among the youngest group, where 35 to 37% of both young men and women agreed with this statement. Notably, young women were more likely than older women to express concern about fathers’ long hours, whereas young men were less likely than older men to view long paternal hours as harmful. As shown in Figure 12, this pattern is likely driven by the fact that young men’s assumptions about what constitutes ‘long hours’ are lower than those of men in other age groups. This helps explain why fewer young men perceive long hours as harmful—not because they support overwork or adhere more strongly to ideal worker norms, but because they define ‘long’ working hours differently.

Figure 13 - Proportion of individuals agreeing that a child suffers if his/her father works too long hours, by age group and gender



Notes: Based on a weighted sample of 6,786 British adults aged 18–59 with complete cases (excluding missing responses for these two questions).

Source: Generation and Gender Survey

Taken together, the GGS provides further support for the attitudes of younger generations revealed in the BSA. Rather than reflecting a return to traditional domestic ideals, the popularity of the tradwife among younger people is more likely to reflect their dissatisfaction with current work norms and work-family models, which they perceive as stressful and exploitative. In the context of increasingly precarious labour markets, declining real wages, rising living costs, and mental health issues, younger generations are placing greater value on work-life balance, caregiving, and well-being. While some traditional expectations remain, such as the expectation that mothers should work shorter hours than fathers, the data show that there is growing support for more equal and sustainable work-care arrangements that prioritise work-life balance for both parents.



CONCLUSIONS

Despite the growing visibility of tradwife content, not only on social media but also increasingly in the broader cultural conversation, our analysis of large-scale datasets and surveys of young women's attitudes does not suggest a significant shift towards more traditional gender role attitudes. On the contrary, both young women and men continue to hold largely progressive views on gender roles, with evidence that attitudes, labour market behaviours, and the division of care responsibilities are moving away from, rather than back towards, the traditional male breadwinner/female caregiver model.

While some women did find aspects of tradwife content alluring and expected to adopt certain elements of these lifestyles, the majority of young women in our survey viewed such content negatively and saw it as having a harmful impact on society. Importantly, the features they found most appealing were not the traditional gender division of labour or power, but rather the depictions of a relaxed, calm, and affluent lifestyle promoted by tradwife influencers. Where traits related to traditional gender role attitudes, such as the male breadwinner model, large families, or female caregiving roles, were viewed positively, this was largely among those who already held conservative beliefs, either politically or through religion. Despite this, many of the tradwife content resonate with young women – particularly those who are burdened by the demands of housework and childcare. At the same time, the growing sense that paid work is becoming increasingly demanding, insecure, and unrewarding pushes even for those without such caring responsibilities to perceive the seemingly simple, stress-free lifestyles depicted by tradwife influencers as more attractive.

The fact that most respondents viewed tradwife content negatively, or were drawn more to its lifestyle imagery than to its gender role prescriptions, does not mean it poses no risk to gender equality. Concerns remain that the glamorised portrayal of calm, domestic life can attract women, only for such content to be used to normalise or justify a more patriarchal order. This is especially troubling when many women report feeling exhausted, stressed, or facing burnout from the dual pressures of paid work and family care. In these circumstances, tradwife content may appear to offer a solution — not through policy reforms that better support work–family balance, such as improved childcare provision or a general reduction in working hours (for example, through a four-day week) — but by reverting to older, more restrictive models of family life. Such exhaustion and frustration may be exploited by neoliberal and conservative fundamentalists in positions of power to dismiss the collective demand, shared by both women and men, for a stronger welfare state and a fairer work–life balance.

This shift risks pushing individuals towards individualised, regressive solutions that undermine not only women's autonomy but also men's evolving sense of identity. It reinforces a narrow, hegemonic ideal of masculinity that restricts men's ability to be active caregivers and to form more emotionally engaged, egalitarian relationships. At the same time, many younger women engaging with tradwife content may have little historical awareness of the realities faced by women in eras when financial dependence left them vulnerable — without legal or economic power and often trapped in relationships marked by inequality or even domestic abuse. Forgetting this history risks romanticising a past that, for many women, was neither safe nor empowering.

This is why the growing popularity of tradwife content should not be dismissed or trivialised as something pertaining to young women and their light frivolous interest. It requires serious attention from policymakers, NGOs, civil society, and all stakeholders invested in gender equality and the resilience of democracy. This phenomenon reflects broader concerns about the inadequacies of current workplace structures and the lack of genuine work–life balance. What the growing trend



shows is that many women want to be able to value and enjoy domestic activities while also realising their potential as a highly educated and productive workforce. The tradwife narrative capitalises on these frustrations, presenting an image of calm, leisure, and fulfilment that feels absent from many people's everyday lives.

Our findings show that the appeal of having more time – may it be to bake bread from scratch with home-grown eggs, to spend relaxed moments with children, or simply to step away from the relentless pressures of modern work – resonates with men as well as women. The real question, then, is whether we, as a society, are prepared to meet these demands in ways that strengthen rather than undermine equality. Without meaningful reforms, there is a danger that people will increasingly turn to nostalgic and restrictive ideals of gender and family life that can be mobilised to legitimise authoritarian, nationalist projects and undermine democratic values.

The solution does not lie in reviving sanitised models of the past, but in reshaping work and care systems to reflect the realities of modern life. This means bold policy measures: reducing overwork through shorter working weeks, expanding affordable and high-quality childcare, supporting men's involvement in care, promoting flexible work that benefits both women and men, and ensuring that care work for both men and women is properly recognised and valued. Meeting these demands is not only essential for gender equality but also for sustaining democratic societies in the face of growing discontent and disillusionment.

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