

THE EVOLUTION OF GENDER ROLES IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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**Abstract.** *The 21st century has seen a dramatic shift in conventional gender roles as a result of changing cultural conventions, legislative changes, and the growth of worldwide feminist and LGBTQ+ movements. This piece examines the evolution of gender expectations in a variety of fields, such as family, school, the workplace, and the media, with an emphasis on the growing visibility and acceptance of different gender identities and manifestations. It analyzes how social media, legislative reforms, and generational attitudes contribute to overcoming entrenched stereotypes and advancing gender equality. The article also discusses persistent issues like gender-based prejudice, wage inequality, and opposition to gender inclusion, despite the obvious advancement. Using a multidisciplinary approach, this work highlights the fluidity of gender roles and the need for ongoing education and advocacy in order to create a more just and inclusive society.*

**Keywords:** *legislative, human existence, femininity, masculinity, non-binary, stereotype, workplace equality, patriarchal traditions.*

**Introduction.** For a very long time, gender roles—the expectations that society places on people's behavior depending on their perceived sex—have had an impact on practically every area of human existence, from interpersonal interactions to employment prospects. These roles have historically been based in patriarchal traditions, which have frequently restricted people's options and strengthened social hierarchies. In contrast, there have been significant changes in the 21st century in how gender is perceived and manifested worldwide. Traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity are being increasingly questioned, redefined, and extended as communities get more connected and progressive.

Modern society is gradually adopting more flexible and inclusive attitudes about gender, influenced by feminist movements, legislative changes, technological developments, and an increasing understanding of gender diversity. The binary framework that formerly governed social norms is being questioned by a greater understanding of non-binary and transgender identities, and men and women are no longer limited to stereotypical roles. The changing nature of gender roles in modern society is examined in this article, along with the major causes behind these shifts and their consequences for individuals, society, and global culture.

**Main part.** With traditional binaries increasingly challenged by evolving cultural, economic, and political dynamics, the 21st century has seen significant shifts in how gender roles are understood and performed. These changes are noticeable in several aspects of society, such as the family, the workplace, the media, and education.

**Changes in the Roles of the Family and Household**

In the past, men were generally considered the main earners, while women were given the majority of household duties (Coontz, 2005). Modern family arrangements, however, show more equal responsibilities. More and more men are now assuming responsibilities for household chores and caregiving, while more women are entering the workforce. In 2020, almost 30% of stay-at-home parents in the United States were fathers, up from only 10% in 1989, according to research conducted by the Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2020).

This change mirrors evolving societal values that promote shared household duties and contradict the idea that caregiving is inherently feminine.

### **Gender Representation and Workplace Equality**

The roles of men and women in the workplace have also changed, with more women entering fields formerly dominated by men, such as STEM, politics, and business management.

Despite persistent differences, attempts to reduce the gender pay gap and increase diversity have gathered steam. With even larger disparities for women of color and those in lower-income nations, women worldwide made an average of 77 cents for every dollar earned by males in 2023 (World Economic Forum, 2023). On the other hand, men are gradually contributing to the breakdown of gender-based occupational segregation by entering traditionally "feminine" fields, like nursing and early childhood education (Williams, 2013).

### **Media Portrayal and Gender Norms**

Digital platforms and mass media are key influencers in how people view gender. In recent years, there has been a deliberate attempt to represent a wider range of gender identities in films, commercials, and social media. A larger cultural move towards inclusivity is fueled by celebrities and influencers who question conventional gender norms. According to studies, more representation of gender-nonconforming people and strong, independent female characters improves public opinion and young people's self-image (Glaad, 2022; Gill, 2007).

### **The Development of Non-Binary Identities and Gender Fluidity**

The shift in perspective that gender is a spectrum rather than a binary has been one of the most notable changes in the 21st century. The visibility of transgender, nonbinary, and genderqueer people has led to an uneven response from social and legal bodies. In nations like Canada, Germany, and New Zealand, official documents now provide a third gender choice (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Additionally, educational institutions and workplaces are starting to implement inclusive language and gender-neutral facilities, indicating a wider cultural transition toward acceptance and equality.

### **Opposition and Backlash**

Resistance to shifting gender norms remains despite progress. Political, religious, and cultural factors frequently oppose gender-inclusive movements and policies. The deeply ingrained nature of traditional gender norms is evident in some areas through anti-feminist rhetoric and opposition to LGBTQ+ rights. This backlash serves as a reminder that progress is not linear and that continued education and advocacy are necessary (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Faludi, 2006).

**Conclusion.** The 21st-century shift in gender roles is a manifestation of a larger cultural revolution brought about by growing knowledge, activism, and social change. Conventional ideas about masculinity and femininity are being reevaluated, resulting in a more inclusive perspective on identity and equality. People are changing long-held stereotypes and adopting more flexible, personalized roles, from the redistribution of household chores to increased gender equality in politics and the workplace. The progress made thus far represents a significant step in the direction of a more just and transparent society, even in the face of persistent opposition and structural inequalities. Institutions, educators, and legislators must promote this progress through inclusive practices, representation, and conversation as gender roles change, making sure that all people, regardless of gender, have the chance to succeed.

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