

Features

Today is International Women's Day, the 100th since it began in 1911. **Alice Wyllie** and **Lee Randall** ask four generations of Scottish women what they think of the lot of modern womanhood

IN March 1911, International Women's Day (IWD) was honoured for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. Over a million people attended rallies on the day, campaigning for women's rights to vote, work and hold public office, and calling for an end to discrimination.

A century later that day has become a truly international occasion, and today thousands of events will take place to mark the 100th International Women's Day and to celebrate the economic, political and social achievements of women.

Some of the demands made at that original rally have been met, but IWD also serves to highlight just how much work still needs to be done – on both a national and international scale – on the road to equality.

Around the globe, women perform 66 per cent of the world's work but earn 10 per cent of the income and own 1 per cent of the property. Women have been the biggest casualties of the global economic crisis, which is expected to plunge a further 22 million women into unemployment, leading to a female unemployment rate of 7.4 per cent, compared to 7 per cent for male unemployment.

The effect of the economic crisis is being felt by women at a local level too. Engender, a Scottish organisation "working on an anti-sexist agenda" recently launched the Who Counts? campaign, which looks at gendered poverty.

"We've spoken to women's groups across Scotland and one of the issues which has been raised time and time again has been worries about cuts to public services," says Karen Dargo of Engender. "Women use these services more than men and they make up the bulk of public sector workers. There's a strong feeling that women will be the ones to pick up the slack when these services go. Of course they will do it out of a sense of duty, but that is going to have a distinct affect on their employment"

From domestic abuse to sexual violence and reproductive rights, the sobering statistics show that 100 years on, highlighting women's issues on IWD remains relevant and necessary.

Twenty-two million unsafe abortions take place every year, around 67,000 of which result in the woman's death. Forty women or girls are raped every day in the Democratic Republic of Congo. An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are living with the consequences of female genital mutilation. At least one in three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, and for women aged 15-44, violence is a major cause of death and disability.

On a national level, 40 years after the Equal Pay Act came into force, there is a 12 per cent gap between men's and women's full-time hourly rates, and a 32 per cent gap between women's part-time hourly and men's full-time equivalent. A woman's average retirement income is 53 per cent of men's and 66 per cent of Scotland's estimated 650,000 unpaid carers are women. And as just 3.7 per cent of reported rapes end in a conviction, Scotland has one of the lowest rape conviction rates in the world, and is the lowest in Europe.

Callum Hendry, of White Ribbon Scotland – a campaign for men in Scotland to end violence against women – says: "Great progress has been made in terms of working towards gender equality over the last 100 years, however there remains much yet to be achieved. With recent police statistics telling us that an incidence of domestic abuse is recorded every ten minutes and with one recent study revealing that over half of those surveyed felt there were certain circumstances in which women should bear responsibility for rape, male violence against women

remains a deeply rooted problem in our society."

As well as highlighting some of the shocking statistics, IWD seeks to celebrate the achievements of women around the globe. Glasgow Women's Library – which celebrates its 20th birthday this year – is hosting a number of events today, from a pop-up women's library to a podcast, (downloadable from womenslibrary.org.uk) the first in a series of Women's Heritage Walks.

Sue John, of Glasgow Women's Library, says: "A big issue for me is tackling the sheer invisibility of women's achievements, typified, for example, by just how few women are ever included in lists of 'Great Scots', writings on the Parliament wall, statues of women in the civic landscape and so on. It is disheartening to experience, as workers involved in championing women's cultural and creative contributions, how long it is taking to change this ongoing neglect of women's actual achievements."

A century after the first IWD, the cultural, political, economic and social contributions of women around the world are immense, but one must wonder if the million people who marched 100 years ago for equality would be surprised that we need to keep marching today, and indeed that women remain so marginalised that they still require an International Women's Day at all.

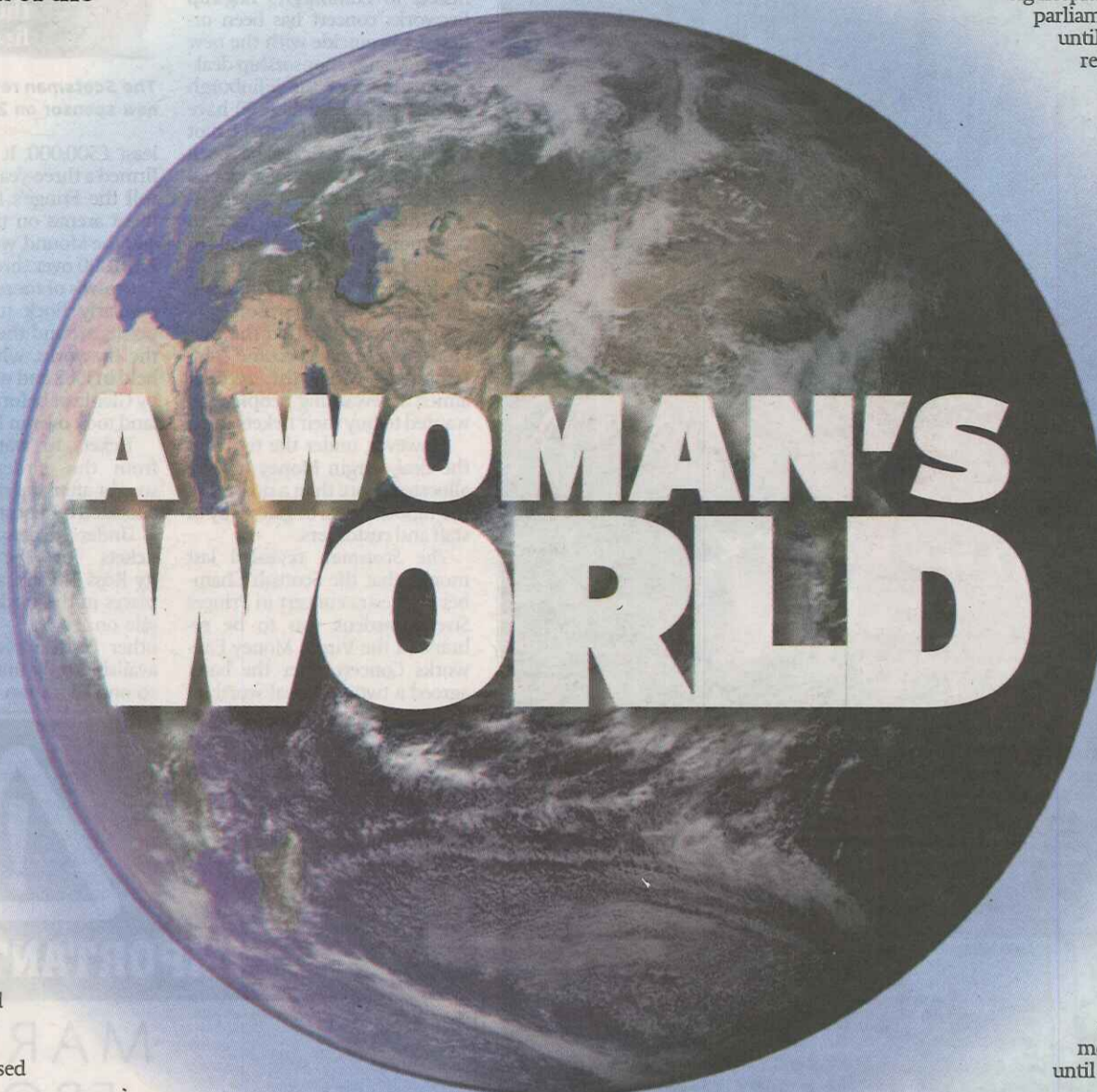
• Visit www.internationalwomensday.com for details

SHELAGH MCKINLAY, 43, MOTHER AND FREELANCE WRITER

"I HAVE been in full-time employment all my life, first in PR, as a government press officer at the Scottish Office, and then as press officer for two big hospital trusts in Glasgow. I joined the parliament in 1999 as a committee clerk, until 2009. I was offered voluntary redundancy at a point when I wanted to try doing something different. The parliament is a family-friendly employer. They were understanding of the pressures that family life brings – for men and women. I see this as the impact of feminism. The more women there are in the workplace, the more women in senior positions, the more these kinds of progressive policies will be seen.

I remember my interview for the Scottish Office, in 1990. They asked if I intended to get married and have children! I don't remember being outraged. Clearly that would not happen in an organisation of that kind today. And now I would reply, 'That's absolutely none of your business and entirely irrelevant.' A lot of unthinking institutional sexism has been, if not eliminated, very much reduced. In most industries what gets you promoted is doing more than is required. I used to work until eight, nine o'clock. I took on extra

Picture: Jane Barlow



SALLY MCKEEVE, 20, A LAW STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

"I THINK International Women's Day is still very relevant, and the centenary is an important time to remember how women's lives have changed over the past century, but also how far we still have to go. It's easy to take for granted the opportunities I have which generations of women fought for. I can't help but notice, for example, that the vast majority of the laws I'm studying were made by men.

As a law student, I'm quite ambitious and one day I want to work at the top of my field. At the moment it feels like I'll be offered the same opportunities to do that as my male peers, however I have given a lot of thought as to where my career might go when I reach my thirties and want to start a family. I'm very aware that balancing the pursuit of a career and raising children is a difficulty which affects women in a way it doesn't affect men, and I do wonder how I might achieve that work/life balance one day. It seems to be an issue women are having to consider even more at the moment with political changes made in light of the economy;

things like child benefits being revoked. I'd like to think that these sorts of things are issues my generation are very aware of, but even if they're not, it's impossible to be ignorant of the issues facing women in developing countries. I'm studying China at the moment, and it's depressing to learn about the barriers women there face in trying to climb the career ladder. We may talk about a 'glass ceiling' in the UK, but for millions of women across the world they're looking at a concrete one."

"We talk about a 'glass ceiling' in the UK, but for millions of women across the world they're looking at a concrete one"





"There's a pressure on women to be sexy in a very provocative way that I don't remember when I was younger"

projects, and got myself promoted. By the time I had Rose, nine years ago, I didn't really want to get promoted again. It's just as well. If I had had kids earlier and been looking to work my way up, or if I was still keen for promotion, it would have been more difficult.

They say fewer young women call themselves feminists. Until you have kids, you can't see the difference. If you can work those long hours and do what's required, you won't be discriminated against. But I see friends in all different industries, whose careers were pretty much neck-and-neck until they had children. You started to see a difference after they had kids. Many women went part-time or gave up work entirely. Probably a lot of men want that, too, but it's not expected that they will take a step backwards in their career, and that makes it harder for them to do it.

Women do the majority of childrearing

because it flows automatically from having had maternity leave. You become the primary carer and build up the network of contacts. Even if you go back to work, that continues.

There's a lot of room for improvement, especially in the sexual objectification of women. We're going backwards. There's pressure on women to be sexy in a very provocative, stereotypical way, that I don't remember existing when I was younger.

Nevertheless, the bottom line is I'd much rather have the choices I have today, which are much less limited by my gender, than the choices my grandmothers had.

We owe an enormous debt to people who campaigned for equality and freedom of choice, sometimes at great risk to themselves."



Picture: Julie Bull

BECKY HEARNE, 26, ASSISTANT EDITOR IN BOOK PUBLISHING, AND EVENTS COORDINATOR AT AN INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE

"I GREW up outside Oxford and first came to Edinburgh for university. My mum worked full time until I was ten, when she had my brother, then returned to work four days a week. That definitely influenced my idea of how life would be when I grew up. She impressed upon me that it was important to have your own money. I respected her, because the responsibility of arranging childcare probably fell on her more than my dad, so it was an additional job for her to do. Because I went to a single-sex school, they were very good at making us feel we could study whatever we wanted. When I was 15 or 16, Baroness Susan Greenfield came to speech day. She did a classics degree, but one day visited a friend in a laboratory and saw a brain in a bucket, and decided she wanted to be a neuroscientist. The fact that she felt able to go ahead and do that made an impact on me. I think I would like children, but I'll think very carefully about it. Specifically, I have confidence in my partner, but, overall in society, my impression is that an unfortunate part of the 'You-can-do-anything' myth is that you end up doing everything.

Society still has a long way to go in terms of how we think women are supposed to look. I don't know anyone who isn't on a diet. It's ironic, because all the magazine photos are touched up, and we know it. And remember that episode of *X Factor*, when they had Rhianna and Christina Aguilera on wearing little more than bikinis? The message was that in order to be a successful female artist, you have to be half naked. It's not like they're not talented, they can both sing! I find that very depressing.

It worries me that people my age see feminism as an insult. To me, feminism means you get a choice. You can stay at home with the kids or go to work; you can get married or not get married; you can have kids or not have kids. Feminism has given you that. I feel a debt to women who have gone before me."

"Society still has a long way to go in how we think women should look. I don't know anyone not on a diet."

Mums count the cost of poor work/life balance

MODERN mothers have on average just 26 minutes a day to themselves as they try to juggle work and family life, according to a major new report covering motherhood over several decades.

The current generation of mothers say in the survey they wish they had the same work/life balance as their mothers had during the 1970s and 1980s.

The report discovered today's women think there was less pressure in the past, as they are now more likely to combine full or part-time jobs with raising families.

The Changing Face of Motherhood, commissioned by household goods giant Procter & Gamble, is released today to coincide with International Women's Day.

Researchers calculated that, on average, mothers get little more than three hours a week "me time", which is about 26 minutes a day.

This compares to the average 145 minutes a day they spend looking after their children - twice as much as they say fathers do.

Almost two thirds of them say this is because they feel they have to go out to work and 29 per cent say they are under constant pressure to be "the perfect mother".

Eighty eight per cent of all mums say they feel guilty about the amount of time they spend with their children as a result.

The research included a series of focus group sessions and a survey of 1,000 UK mothers by the Social Issues Research Centre on behalf of P&G.

Meanwhile, a separate report found that half of Scottish working women are now the main breadwinners in their household.

This report also shows that women are not just increasing their personal earning power but are also gaining a stronger financial voice at home.

More than three in five working women say they are the most likely to raise money discussions in their own household, compared to just 57 per cent of working men who said that they are chiefly responsible for talking finances.



Picture: Donald MacLeod

LESLIE HILLS, 65, INDEPENDENT FILM PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR OF SKYLINE PRODUCTIONS

"GROWING up I was brought up to believe that boys were the norm, and you were the 'other'. I left school at 16 with highers in physics, chemistry and maths. At Glasgow University a row of us were sent to see a woman who said, 'English and history are nice for young ladies' - and I was assigned to that course. If I'd known anyone who'd gone to university, if anyone in my family had, I might have known that I had a choice. I thought you went to your local primary, your local high school and your local university - and they told you what you were going to study.

I have two daughters in their thirties and a granddaughter. When I take her to the shops there's a wall of clothes for girls and one for boys. And they are highly gendered. Back in the 1970s, we degendered toys, we degendered clothes. Now, the boys' clothes are all different colours, while the girls' side is just pink. In the 70s, we'd have been picketing them.

It's cyclical. You get movements and they go away. I used to say, 'This time it'll be different, because this time we have a literature, this time we have a theory. It's not going to get lost

"I will not have my granddaughter's horizons lowered. I will not have her told that she is less worthy"

Picture: Jane Barlow



the way it got lost before.' But it has been lost. In the 1970s there was a real push to do something about sexism. Women counted. We did all these things and everybody thinks it's over, so we stopped counting. My daughters' experience is totally different. They have different attitudes altogether, and a different evaluation of themselves. My older daughter went to a school where the headteacher took the boys out to see the gas works and not the girls. She objected, and continued to object about things like that. At her age, I wouldn't have known that there was a problem.

I worked as an educator for 21 years and was once given a film by a body in charge of promoting Scotland that I refused to play.

It showed men fishing, playing golf,

doing all sorts of important things, and one picture of a woman - a tourist with a mad hat on. That's what you get when you come to Scotland? This gives our children a picture of what the world is like. Everywhere you go you get more images of men in control than women.

What this country needs is just one policy: social equality. It would change the economic structure and the social structure and solve almost every problem. The underlying prejudices are still there. International Women's Day is important because it makes us think about these issues. We have to keep on making the case. We have to do it for other women. I will not have my granddaughter's horizons lowered. I will not have her told that she is less worthy."