



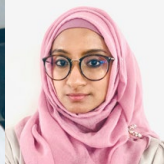
# Gender bias: A global perspective

Stories from  
Thoughtworkers  
around the world



 **thoughtworks**

Design. Engineering. AI.



This project came about with a simple intention: to help build deeper cultural understanding across our regions through truly human stories from Thoughtworkers around the world. What this path carved for us has felt truly remarkable.

We asked our gender Employee Resource Group (ERG) leads to suggest some folks; many of them volunteered themselves. The interviews were filled with joy and tears, shocking reminders of inequality and humbling moments of how we are all connected through our lived experiences, our resilience and the need for community. These stories are a reminder of why we love this community of people, and we are all deeply grateful for the time, candor, authenticity and energy of each and every participant. Thank you!

We hope this little book does some small justice to the conversations we had and encourages you to spend some time with your teams, just ten minutes, getting to know each others' realities.

**Preeti Mishra, Shalini Jagadish and Katy White.**



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# Why are we talking about gender bias in 2025?

We wish we didn't have to, but around the world women's rights are being reversed. There is still a huge disparity in unpaid labour and the World Economic Forum<sup>1</sup> estimates it will take 134 years to achieve salary parity at the current rate of progress. **In tech, where women represent just 28.2% of the global workforce**, the hill to climb is steeper.

Our conversations with Thoughtworkers worldwide were about their experiences, hopes, fears and frustrations.

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<sup>1</sup> [WEF's 2024 Global Gender Gap Report](#)

# 134

## years

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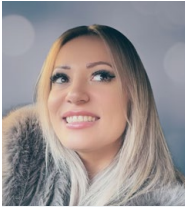
## Meet our contributors



**Marivone Araujo**  
Brazil



**Mackenzie Dysart**  
Canada



**Arina Ciocildau**  
Romania



**Victoria McGloin**  
UK



**Sharina Bi Abdul Rashid, Singapore**



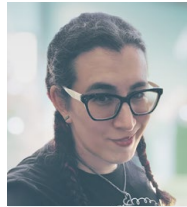
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India



# The inheritance of expectations

**“I told my parents I wanted to go outside and ride bikes with my brother, and make friends. The next day my father brought me home a puppy.”**



Puja

From grandmothers whose freedom, whose lives, only emerged after their husbands passed away, to mothers who woke before dawn to prepare meals before their professional workday began, the women we spoke with are navigating expectations shaped by generations before them. These patterns—sometimes embraced, sometimes rejected—form the foundations of what it means to be a woman today.

“I told my parents I wanted to go outside and ride bikes with my brother, and make friends. The next day my father brought me home a puppy,” Puja remembered. Growing up in India, Puja’s freedom was constrained by traditional gender roles and safety concerns. “My parents didn’t feel safe with me being outside.”

For Arina in Romania, growing up among boys and with much more freedom, the constraints came from the opposite direction – from internalized ideas about strength and success: “I was looking up to the boys and thinking that they are smarter,



**For Arina in Romania, growing up among boys and with much more freedom, the constraints came from the opposite direction – from internalized ideas about strength and success.**

more powerful. I would prefer to have a conversation with a boy, because I thought that they were more meaningful,” she explains. This led her to reject traditionally feminine interests, hobbies and friendships, “I kind of discredited the girls ... as not meaningful, not interesting.”

These moments often return as painful reflections later in life. Doris told us a profound realization about her relationship with her mother: “My mom is a product of her history, a woman shaped by the gender bias of her time. China’s super traditional culture expected a woman to focus on her family, support her husband. This has left deep scars on my mom.” Understanding this intergenerational pattern was transformative: “Realizing this was when I felt light, it was a truly magic moment.”

## Doris with family.







**“My mom is a huge inspiration; she was very forward-thinking, and because of her I am like this: I am liberal. I’m open. She fought for gender norms in her time, and I feel like that has been handed over to me as well.”**

**Manu**

For others, like Manu, their mothers modeled a different path forward: “My mom is a huge inspiration; she was very forward-thinking, and because of her I am like this: I am liberal. I’m open. She fought for gender norms in her time, and I feel like that has been handed over to me as well.”

Even as we forge new paths professionally, it seems we are all engaged in a conversation (or a struggle) with past generations—both challenging inherited ideas and drawing strength from resistance and resilience. Jackie’s mother is an interesting example of the contradictions involved, as someone who broke gender norms professionally while reinforcing them personally: “It was interesting to see my mom break out of the machista culture for herself, but still have those ideas about safety... She felt like a man would be more fit for keeping me safe than myself.”

This intergenerational dialogue—sometimes spoken, sometimes silent—forms part of the backdrop of women's lives, creating both challenges to overcome and sources of unexpected strength.

## **The persistence of gendered roles**

Despite advances in workplace equality, our conversations revealed how gendered expectations continue to shape daily realities in many homes around the world. These patterns persist even in families where all adults work professionally, creating a “double burden” for women, but Thoughtworkers are redefining how they live in many ways.

“My mom would wake up at 5 am, cook for everyone, and then leave for work,” Raghvi recalls of her childhood in India, where her mother was a school principal. “My mom spent a lot of time in the kitchen, same for my Chachi [aunt]. My uncle and aunt were both doctors, but my Chachi is also having to do all the work at home as well.” This double burden didn't simply involve practical tasks but often came with emotional manipulation.



**“My mom would wake up at 5 am, cook for everyone, and then leave for work,” Raghvi recalls of her childhood in India, where her mother was a school principal.**



**Victoria with her first child, ten years earlier  
she had been raising her foster siblings.**

Victoria shares a memory from her Scottish upbringing: “Although I did generally share responsibilities with my twin brother, I often seemed to take the lead... At 17, when my parents were away for two weeks, they left me in charge (of younger foster siblings, the house and animals). Not my brother of the same age.”

In Romania, these roles are still deeply entrenched, especially outside of the bigger cities, as Arina explains: “My experience is that in Romania they are still going on a traditional picture where the man is the breadwinner and the woman—earning maybe one quarter of how much a man would earn—the women are handling everything else, the kids, the house.” This inequality is often justified through economics, which are of course, a result of the gendered roles: “I think (the men) do not value their spouses and their work. They’re kind of dismissive. They think that it’s normal to take care of kids, to clean the household because they are not earning as much money.”

Natália describes that the awareness of imbalance is growing: “At least in Brazil, we understand that women are the ones that take care. And this is something that is being spoken a lot about now — that is, the economy of care — meaning that women spend most of their time taking care of the elderly, of the children, of other women.”

Even in more progressive households, Raghvi notes the subtle persistence of the mental load: “Even if you get help, you have to invest your energy into what has to happen ... It’s mostly the women who are coming home tired —as tired as the husband — but also taking care of the child and the chores.”



**“It’s mostly the women who are coming home tired —as tired as the husband— but also taking care of the child and the chores.”**

**Raghvi**

## **One generation of change**

What also emerges powerfully across geographies is how quickly patterns can shift—sometimes within a single generation. Marivone witnessed this in her father: “My father didn’t want my mother to work or study, but later, many years after their divorce, he became almost a feminist in his way, insisting that his daughters study.”





**“When I turned 19, I moved here and decided to live with my boyfriend. Because my brother did it, so why can’t I do it? My mom barely spoke to me for a whole year.”**

**Jackie**

Sometimes, these changes have to be forced, and it’s painful, as Jackie told us: “When my brother was 19, he moved in with his girlfriend here in the US. And when I turned 19, I moved here and decided to live with my boyfriend. Because my brother did it, so why can’t I do it? My mom barely spoke to me for a whole year.”

Sometimes the changes come in unexpected ways, as Mackenzie witnessed in her father’s response to a friend’s gender transition: “The fact that my dad’s concern wasn’t about how he would interact with this person post transition... but just how would she be able to find shoes... was one of the most



**“The fact that my dad’s concern wasn’t about how he would interact with this person post transition... but just how would she be able to find shoes... was one of the most wholesome and reassuring thoughts.”**

**Mackenzie**

wholesome and reassuring thoughts.” Yet, in other parts of the world, rights are being reversed. Women, people of color and the LGBTQIA+ community are increasingly fearful because their reproductive rights, their access to healthcare and other benefits and structural support are being taken away.

Meg told us: “I grew up in South Africa, and there is legislation in place there, protecting everyone against discrimination, since Mandela’s time. And I get so sad for the US, we spend so much time going backwards — women’s rights, LGBTQ rights. Why are we talking about this? Let people live!”



**“I grew up in South Africa, and there is legislation in place there, protecting everyone against discrimination, since Mandela’s time.”**

**Meg**

Anna, who transitioned seven years ago, experiences this regression deeply in her daily life: “I live in an area right now, where it’s probably not safe for me to go out in public. So I just stay home.... I feel much safer in bigger cities.” The contrast with her life before transition is stark: “In my twenties and thirties, there was never an issue with safety. I could go anywhere, do anything. And now I don’t even want to leave my house, which is a little wild to think about.”

So progress is neither guaranteed nor linear. Everyone we talked to was acutely aware of both how far we’ve come and how quickly gains can be reversed.

# Unequal starting lines

**“I would say something, no one would listen, and then someone, some guy, would repeat exactly what I said, and the idea was very well received.”**



Marivone



Gender bias creates fundamentally different career starting points that have nothing to do with individual abilities or choices. Thoughtworkers around the globe described remarkably similar experiences of how gender bias operates through individual attitudes but is also embedded in organizations and cultures.

Doris painted a picture of her feelings about starting a career: “Men, they are already sitting at the table while we are still at the door.” Does success, despite the starting blocks being different, come from true equality or from learning to “adapt and mimic masculine behavior,” as Arina did?

Women’s voices are still diminished or appropriated. Marivone shares: “I would say something, no one would listen, and then someone, some guy, would repeat exactly what I said, and the idea was very well received.” Victoria, a principal developer in the UK, confirms: “I get talked over, cut out of strategic conversations, and my ideas are adopted as that of the males’ in the room. There is a lot of entrenched unconscious bias that still exists, even in a workplace as enlightened as ours.”

**Thoughtworkers around the globe described remarkably similar experiences of how gender bias operates through individual attitudes but is also embedded in organizations and cultures.**



For people at the helm of intersectionalities like race, religion and gender, these challenges multiply. Sharina, an Asian Muslim woman who wears a hijab, explains: “There’s definitely a lot of stereotyping. However, I’ve been fortunate in both my schooling years and my career to experience that when you contribute meaningfully to a discussion, you earn respect, and the stereotypes begin to fade.” But she acknowledges this comes at a cost: “There are still moments, especially in unfamiliar settings, where I hesitate to speak out for fear of being judged.”



**“There’s definitely a lot of stereotyping. However, I’ve been fortunate in both my schooling years and my career to experience that when you contribute meaningfully to a discussion, you earn respect, and the stereotypes begin to fade.”**

**Sharina**

Anna’s experience provides perhaps the most stark illustration of how gender affects professional authority. After her transition, she returned to work [before Thoughtworks]: “Prior to transitioning, I was the loudest person, and people would just listen to what I had to say. But there was a striking change... When I came back it was night and day how different people treated me. I was talked over at meetings constantly. People would ask other people for their opinions, and when I would chime in, they would just ignore it.” Same person, same

expertise—but entirely different treatment. This before-and-after comparison reveals bias that can't be dismissed as coincidental or performance-based.

Women also face unique scrutiny about their appearance and behavior. These critiques aren't relevant to aptitude but focus on gendered expectations of presentation and demeanor. Even Thoughtworkers, smart, enlightened, successful professionals, sometimes find themselves unconsciously reinforcing these patterns. Meg reflects: "One thing I still catch myself doing is always assigning myself to set up meetings... We still lean into this role of like the supporter, or the helper or the note taker, picking up the 'other' or 'less important' work."

To sum it up, women still need to spend significant energy navigating bias and entrenched patterns before they can do their work—an invisible tax on time and mental resources that their male colleagues simply don't face. Manu describes "boys club" environments at clients: "How do you break those barriers? How do you sort of assert your independence in the workplace? Those [tools] are still lacking."



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**Anna**

## Time poverty

The mathematics of women's days simply doesn't add up—across countries and contexts, women are trying to fit 30 hours of responsibilities into 24-hour days. Research shows that globally, women perform 76.2 percent of total hours of unpaid care work<sup>2</sup>—more than three times as much as men. This “time poverty” affects every aspect of their lives, from health to career advancement to personal identity development, with a compounding effect on wages of course.

**76.2%** Women's total hours  
of unpaid care work



This burden affects women's health in Brazil. Natália told us: “Women have more chronic diseases and infections because they are exhausted.... It's the mental load. It's the physical load, and it's worse when we talk about poor women, Black women, transgender women.”

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-women-do-4-times-more-unpaid-care-work-men-asia-and-pacific>



## Redefining home partnerships

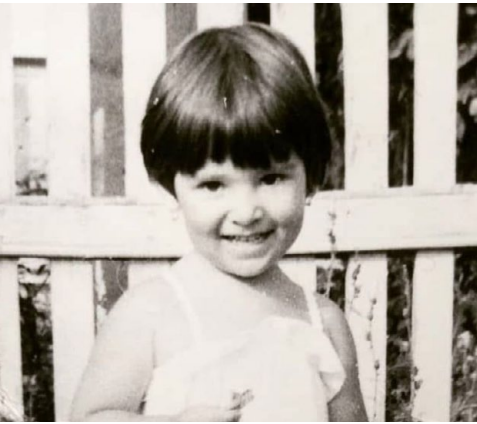
Against a backdrop of time poverty and uneven domestic burdens, many of our Thoughtworkers are redefining partnership in their homes. “Everything here in my house is completely divided and it was like that before the boys came,” Marivone explains. But it’s not that simple: “Sadly, when [my partner] has mentioned this arrangement at work, he has been bullied for it. When he said something about washing the clothes... people started mocking him, not only men, but men and women.”

Mackenzie describes a very logical approach: “We divvy up home responsibilities the way that makes sense for us. He does most of the laundry because he is a wizard at getting stains out of things.”

### Mackenzie with family.



For Sharina, it's based on joy: "We each take on different responsibilities at home, gravitating towards the chores we enjoy most." This transforms domestic work from obligation to chosen contribution. But these arrangements remain the exception rather than the rule in the wider community.



**"Being successful is not a masculine thing. It's just a human thing. And it's better that you are self sufficient, that you don't need to hold on to a man because of the financial situation."**

Arina

For single parents like Arina and Natália, partnership means creating support systems. Natália explains: "I have really good friends and family members that come and stay and help me." But she notes a common pattern: "Again, it's mostly women."

The redistribution of domestic labor is so important because it creates the foundation for economic independence and professional growth. As Arina tells her young daughter: "Being successful is not a masculine thing. It's just a human thing. And it's better that you are self sufficient, that you don't need to hold on to a man because of the financial situation."

## Layers of inequality

Gender inequality interacts with other forms of discrimination, and these layers of marginalization vary across regions.

"In Brazil we can never talk about society without talking about the classes... and we cannot forget to talk about race as well, because it changes drastically the type of inequity, the type of violence, the type of abuse," Natália explains.

Anna faces xenophobia regularly: "I'm half Greek and I'm half Korean. And I get asked by people in my area why I don't go back to Mexico, it's insane how bold people are about it."

These layered experiences shape how women navigate professional spaces. Doris describes her strategy in early career: "I say yes, I can bring pizza for you. I can bring a coffee for you. But I say yes to them, because I say yes to my future... Right now the philosophy or the storyline has become, say no, say no to the dangerous thing, say no to the sexual harassment. But at that time I say yes, because at the time, it gave more credit, gave more power, empowerment to myself so that in the future I can say no."

**Doris during her startup days in Silicon Valley.**



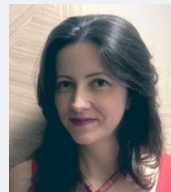
Jackie reflected that she adapts her style depending on who she is with: “I feel more powerful when I’m around other women than when I’m dealing with men, especially when they’re in higher roles.” This is one of many ways people develop social navigation skills to work in environments not designed for them.

But there are also ways to change the environment, rather than accepting it. Mackenzie gave one example: “I try to make sure if I’m working with someone in a different region, that I’m helping promote a female in engineering.”



# Let's talk about safety

**“The biggest [gender issue] that we should take care of as a society is security. If we are afraid of going out of the office too late, this is wrong.”**



Natália



## Jackie and her brothers.

As Natália said: “The biggest [gender issue] that we should take care of as a society is security. If we are afraid of going out of the office too late, this is wrong. This is an overload as well for women that have to recalculate their routes and times and everything.”

The constraints begin early, and don’t go away. Jackie’s experience growing up in Puerto Rico, for example: “My mom liked me to have a boyfriend. She felt I guess I needed a man to protect me when I went out. So I was always in relationships, for that reason.”

**58%** of women report declining professional options due to safety considerations.



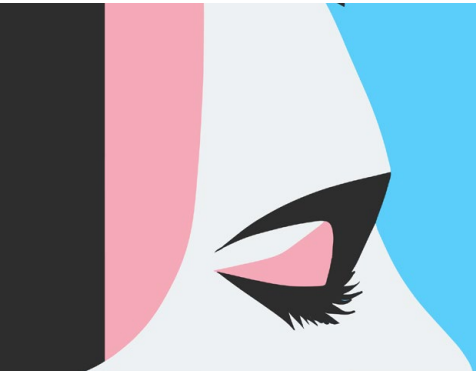
**“I was talking to a man I know, and I asked him if he ever hit his wife, and he said like, ‘Oh, no, I don’t agree with that. I mean it happened like two times. But she asked for it...’”**

**Arina**

Nearly 58 per cent of women report declining professional options due to safety considerations. But gender-based violence is the reality behind these safety calculations, including in the home. Raghvi discovered how prevalent domestic abuse is among women working as household help in India: “A vast proportion of this group of women, they’re getting beaten up at home.”

Even more troubling is how normalized such violence becomes. Arina shares a disturbing conversation: “I was talking to a man I know, and I asked him if he ever hit his wife, and he said like, ‘Oh, no, I don’t agree with that. I mean it happened like two times. But she asked for it... And then she shut up. So yeah, I do not agree with violence.’”

For trans women, safety concerns intensify. Anna describes life after transition in rural Wisconsin: “The number of people who would follow me out to my vehicle after shopping and just scream at me.”



**Anna describes life after transition in rural Wisconsin: “The number of people who would follow me out to my vehicle after shopping and just scream at me.”**



**Women’s experiences of safety threats cross all boundaries of geography, class and culture.**

Women’s experiences with safety threats cross all boundaries of geography, class and culture. Online and in the world, at home, at work and in our communities, safety challenges are a shared reality for women globally. There is a persistent background risk assessment process running in women’s minds that consumes mental energy, constrains choices and creates boundaries that (cis/hetero) men rarely have to consider. This shared reality represents perhaps the most fundamental form of gender inequity globally.

## Economic safety

Beyond physical safety, economic independence emerged as a vital form of security that many women still struggle to achieve.

Economic dependence creates dangerous vulnerabilities for women in India, (in this context, household workers) as Raghvi explains: “They’re not able to leave... they find themselves stuck in that situation. They cannot go back to their homes. Their parents won’t support them.” This creates a cycle that’s hard to break: economic independence enhances safety, but safety concerns prevent achieving economic independence.



**“Take care; you will never stop working, Raghvi. I don’t care what you do. You have to be working, make your own money, and gain your respect, and then do whatever you want to.”**

**Advice from Raghvi’s mother**

This reality even shaped the advice Raghvi received from her mother—guidance that would ultimately change her life trajectory: “Take care; you will never stop working, Raghvi. I don’t care what you do. You have to be working, make your own money, and gain your respect, and then do whatever you want to.” This wasn’t just about income but about fundamental security: “What if tomorrow somebody tells me, ‘I don’t want to



be with you anymore. Please leave.' If I'm not earning, if I'm not able to take care of myself, where am I gonna go?" For single mothers like Arina, economic independence is particularly critical: "I do not have any safety net. So if, for example, if I lose my job, that's really bad."

**Gender inequality accumulates across a lifetime, resulting in disproportionate economic vulnerability in old age.**



**"In Australia, the pay gap currently sits at 21.8%. However, when it comes to retirement funds, the gap is as much as 47.8 per cent by the time we get to retirement age (thanks to missing out on the 'magic' of compounding interest)."**

**Ada**

Ada from Australia highlights how seemingly modest gender pay gaps compound over time into massive economic disadvantages: "In Australia, the pay gap currently sits at 21.8%. However, when it comes to retirement funds, the gap is as much as 47.8 per cent by the time we get to retirement age (thanks to missing

out on the 'magic' of compounding interest).” This reveals how gender inequality accumulates across a lifetime, resulting in disproportionate economic vulnerability in old age.

In Brazil, Natália describes a stark economic reality: “Forty nine per cent of women are the main householder providers or the breadwinners... We have a really high number of single moms and of kids that don’t have their father’s name in their documents. Women can’t ‘opt out’ of parenthood, while men do.” Yet single moms still face additional prejudice both at work and in their communities.

The way forward involves both individual determination and systemic change. Doris is involved in mentoring young professional women in China: “It’s like a passion is a luxury for women... No one asked ladies, ‘What’s your passion?’” Her approach focuses first on helping women identify their core values and desires, challenging the notion that career advancement alone equals gender equality.

## **Doris attending the Google Developer Conference with the ThoughtWorks China Customer Experience and Product team**



## Psychological safety at work

In the context of physical and economic security, psychological safety is easy to overlook. But our conversations also revealed how issues with psychological safety limit women's ability to thrive professionally, especially women with multiple marginalised identities.

One aspect is the way assertiveness is interpreted through a gendered lens. Mackenzie notes: "When a female or female-identifying person is holding male coworkers accountable, all of a sudden they're seen as difficult, loud, bossy." Ada adds: "In my early career, I was called \*\*\*\*\*; yet assertive male colleagues would be labelled 'confident', 'driven', 'knows what he's doing.'"

Standing by is acceptance, Mackenzie adds: "When it's said in front of a male colleague who you thought was a friend who doesn't stand up for you... It's when people let it happen, and don't call it out that's really frustrating and challenging."



Assertiveness is interpreted through a gendered lens.



**"When a female or female-identifying person is holding male coworkers accountable, all of a sudden they're seen as difficult, loud, bossy."**

**Mackenzie**

Beyond frustrating is the internalising of blame, and women being held responsible for managing men's emotions and responses. Ada identifies this pattern: "One particular aspect which I find surfaces in the workplace is unconscious bias towards 'victim-blaming'. We spend more thought around the 'triggering' behaviours to 'understand' the reaction from a male, and it becomes a fine line (often crossed) to justify that reaction."

Victoria shares another aspect of blame and shame culture: "I have been told that the only reason I got a certain role is because I am female, and it helps with diversity targets. This is despite me being excellent for the job, and it definitely undermined my confidence for a while."

These patterns aren't restricted to men. Doris describes negative experiences with female leaders: "Women who suffered in a toxic environment sometimes end up passing this bias to others.... That leader is behaving that way because people tell her, 'you're not young anymore. One day Doris or younger team member will replace you.'" Knowing this trauma is being passed on helped Doris move on: "I don't feel angry; I feel sorry for her."



**"We spend more thought around the 'triggering' behaviours to 'understand' the reaction from a male, and it becomes a fine line (often crossed) to justify that reaction."**

**Ada**



# The motherhood penalty

**“In a previous workplace, I felt my value gradually diminish after the birth of my second child...”**



Sharina





**“It is me who takes carer’s leave when needed, and who cuts short client-facing travel to accommodate school events.”**

**Victoria**

Compounding gender inequalities felt through education, home life and early career, the motherhood penalty is a global reality. With the pay gap drastically increasing after parenthood, and a large portion of women leaving the workforce, working mothers face unique challenges that require both policy interventions and cultural shifts.

Victoria articulates how motherhood affects her professional life despite supportive policies: “Being a mother impacts my professional life much more than it does my husband’s. It is me who takes carer’s leave when needed, and who cuts short client-facing travel to accommodate school events.... I’m seen as unreliable despite positive support from Thoughtworkers leadership who say exactly the right thing like: ‘family is WAAAAY more important than anything we’re doing here.’”

Sharina shared her experience: “In a previous workplace, I felt my value gradually diminish after the birth of my second child, with opportunities seeming to fade away.... That’s why I deeply appreciate Thoughtworks—where senior leadership, many of whom have young children, foster a culture of empathy and compassion.”

Mackenzie notes how assumptions about parenthood affect careers differently: “There’s expectations that you be in the office less or that, maybe you’re less career-driven. Maybe those should be assumptions applied to both genders.” But the motherhood penalty operates systematically; often, new fathers enjoy promotion or pay increases because they are perceived as more reliable — which, in turn, leads to them working longer hours and more reliance on mothers to pick up care responsibilities even after returning to work.



**“There’s expectations that you be in the office less or that, maybe you’re less career-driven. Maybe those should be assumptions applied to both genders.”**

**Mackenzie**

## **A physiological reality**

Taking time out post-birth or adoption is often linked to the motherhood penalty in terms of falling behind on career progression. But it’s a legal requirement in many countries for a good reason. Raghvi talked about the critical importance of

maternity leave in terms of physical recovery and bonding. Raghvi shares: “I was like, ‘Why do I need 6 months? I’m making plans. I’m gonna do this course’... But when it hits you, you are so thankful for those six months.... I went through intense postpartum blues... I wasn’t with Thoughtworks then, but we have mental health support that I think I could have made use of [at that time].” The combination of physical recovery, sleep deprivation, and new responsibilities creates a perfect storm that policy needs to provide support for.



**“Life has its magic...  
When you are a mom  
of twins, toddlers, you  
see magic every day.”**

Natália

Despite many challenges, motherhood also brings new perspectives and builds resilience. Natalia reflects: “Life has its magic... When you are a mom of twins, toddlers, you see magic every day.”

## **Finding (and giving) support**

Building supportive networks emerged as crucial in many of our conversations. These networks take different forms, but they share a common purpose—creating solidarity and practical assistance in systems not designed for women’s success.



**“You listen  
to another  
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**Raghvi**

For Raghvi, online motherhood communities were essential lifelines: “These groups are so good, so good. You listen to another woman’s story and the help she is given and you know what you can do, and that you will be okay.” She describes breastfeeding support groups in particular as “game changers through and through.”

Many of our people acknowledge their privilege and work to create support for others. Doris told us: “In China, I lead our Chinese tech lady community... This is one of my proud babies in Thoughtworks China.” Manu hosts the ‘Tilt Shift’ gender ERG in the US as co-chair, creating much-needed moments of solidarity in the current climate. These formal and informal networks provide both support and psychological safety.



**“In China, I lead our Chinese tech lady community... This is one of my proud babies in Thoughtworks China.”**

**Doris**

**Manu hosts the ‘Tilt Shift’ gender ERG in the US as co-chair, creating much-needed moments of solidarity.**

Support needs to be hands-on and tangible. For some, supportive life partners make a critical difference. In professional settings, allies who speak up against discrimination are crucial. Anna recounts: “I’ve been lucky that I’ve only had one negative experience at Thoughtworks. It was a client, and I didn’t even get to say anything about it because the tech leader on my team at the time literally stopped the meeting to reprimand the client, and that was just a great feeling.”



# Joy as a strategy

**“Self-care is not getting your nails done; for me it looks like rest, exercise, therapy and taking time to connect with my friends.”**



Natália

Despite their diverse backgrounds and experiences, our Thoughtworkers describe similar approaches to finding meaning amid struggle. One of them is benefit-finding – the process of finding positives in difficult situations. It's a positive outcome in itself, and it's associated with better psychological, contextual and health outcomes.

"It is hard, extremely hard... but it's also a blessing.... When I think about something bad or difficult about raising my boys, immediately something good comes in my mind," Marivone reflects. This capacity to find wonder amid exhaustion provides a sustainable source of resilience.

**"When I think about something bad or difficult about raising my boys, immediately something good comes in my mind."**

**Marivone**



Natália highlights joy as an important dimension of resistance: “It’s important to remember that we can do it with joy because of our strength, because of who we are, because of the women that were there, our ancestors before us, I think we become even stronger.”

Cultivating joy as a survival strategy is a pattern that has developed across oppressed communities and generations. Mere survival isn’t enough; finding moments of happiness is an act of resistance, demonstrating that we are thriving in systems designed to exhaust and diminish.

**“It’s important to remember that we can do it with joy because of our strength, because of who we are, because of the women that were there, our ancestors before us, I think we become even stronger.”**

Natália



Self-care emerges as a related theme, though Natália observes: “When we become moms, sometimes it’s almost shameful to say that you are prioritizing yourself.” She redefines what true self-care means: “Self-care is not getting your nails done; for me it looks like rest, exercise, therapy and taking time to connect with my friends.”

For Raghvi, yoga has become a pathway to both physical and mental well-being: “It’s about making things okay for myself, and for that, you need a strong heart and a strong soul. And you need that conviction... that I know what is best for me, and I’m gonna do it. I deserve it.”

## Space to thrive

As we wrap up, a final pattern to share is in the way folks described their experience at Thoughtworks compared to previous workplaces. “The difference when I got to Thoughtworks was that every team that I joined was very mixed. It was always very colorful, and people were very different from one another... I was heard, even if I was a junior developer,” Marivone shares.

**“The difference when I got to Thoughtworks was that .... people were very different from one another... and I was heard, even if I was a junior developer.”**

**Marivone**





Anna experienced a stark contrast with her previous workplace: “And then I came to Thoughtworks, and my first team was like, Anna, what kind of ideas do you have? Because we’re stuck.’ And I told them what I thought, and they were like, let’s do that.”

For Raghvi, the acceptance of her whole self stands out: “It feels so liberating... I really feel like all of Thoughtworks is my friend, and there’s not one person that’s judging me. Here, I can share with people that I have a side gig. I teach Yoga, and they are clapping. They’re not like, ‘Hmm! So you’re not doing your work?’”

Finding joy doesn’t mean ignoring injustice. Instead, it allows women to sustain their energy for long-term advocacy and change.





These stories remind us that progress happens through individual choices (and battles) and systemic shifts, and we all have a part to play. As women, to lift each other up and not accept ‘the way it has always been’.

As Thoughtworkers, to constantly check our biases and consider how inclusive our teams and spaces are. Because it is exhausting having to fight to be in the room, in Natália’s words: “Maybe I would like us not to need to fight so much and just exist.”

We hope you’ve enjoyed these glimpses into Thoughtworkers’ experiences. Their stories remind us that the work of gender equity is far from complete, and that it’s essential for us to create spaces where everybody can thrive.

Preeti Mishra, Shalini Jagadish and Katy White



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