

## ★ **The Home Stretch: Why the Gender Revolution Stalled at the Kitchen Sink**

**Sally Howard**

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Sally Howard examines the value and devaluation of unpaid housework in *The Home Stretch*.

Though more and more women are entering the work force, responsibility for domestic chores—cooking, cleaning, childcare, and other family obligations—remains largely in women’s hands. Howard explores various theories about why that is, what effects this has had on people of all genders, and what steps must be taken to ensure greater equality in the future.

Across the world, Howard contends, both men and women are socialized to accept that most, if not all, domestic labor is women’s work. From there, social pressures and disparate career opportunities force women to build their self-worth around how clean their houses are and how perfect their families look. Meanwhile, men who are willing to help with housework only do so behind closed doors to avoid mockery.

Feminists of the early 1970s pushed to change these norms, but their attempts were short-lived. Since then, most feminists have been so focused on gaining equality in the workplace that they neglected the issue of equality in the home. Today, an increasing number of immigrant women and women of color bear the brunt of this failure as underpaid domestic laborers, whose exploitation allows middle-class white couples an easy “out” to arguments about who cleans what.

While focusing largely on heterosexual couples, the book acknowledges differences present in same-sex relationships. It discusses how race, class, and nationality impact gender roles and the division of labor, and even explores more unconventional living arrangements, such as women-only communes. Nor does Howard exempt herself from analysis: she puts her own household under the feminist microscope, and she doesn’t like what she sees. Reality can crush even the highest feminist ideals—but, Howard argues, with legislative and personal commitment, reality can change.

With thorough research and biting humor, *The Home Stretch* examines the effects of economic and gender inequality on households throughout the world.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (July / August 2021)

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