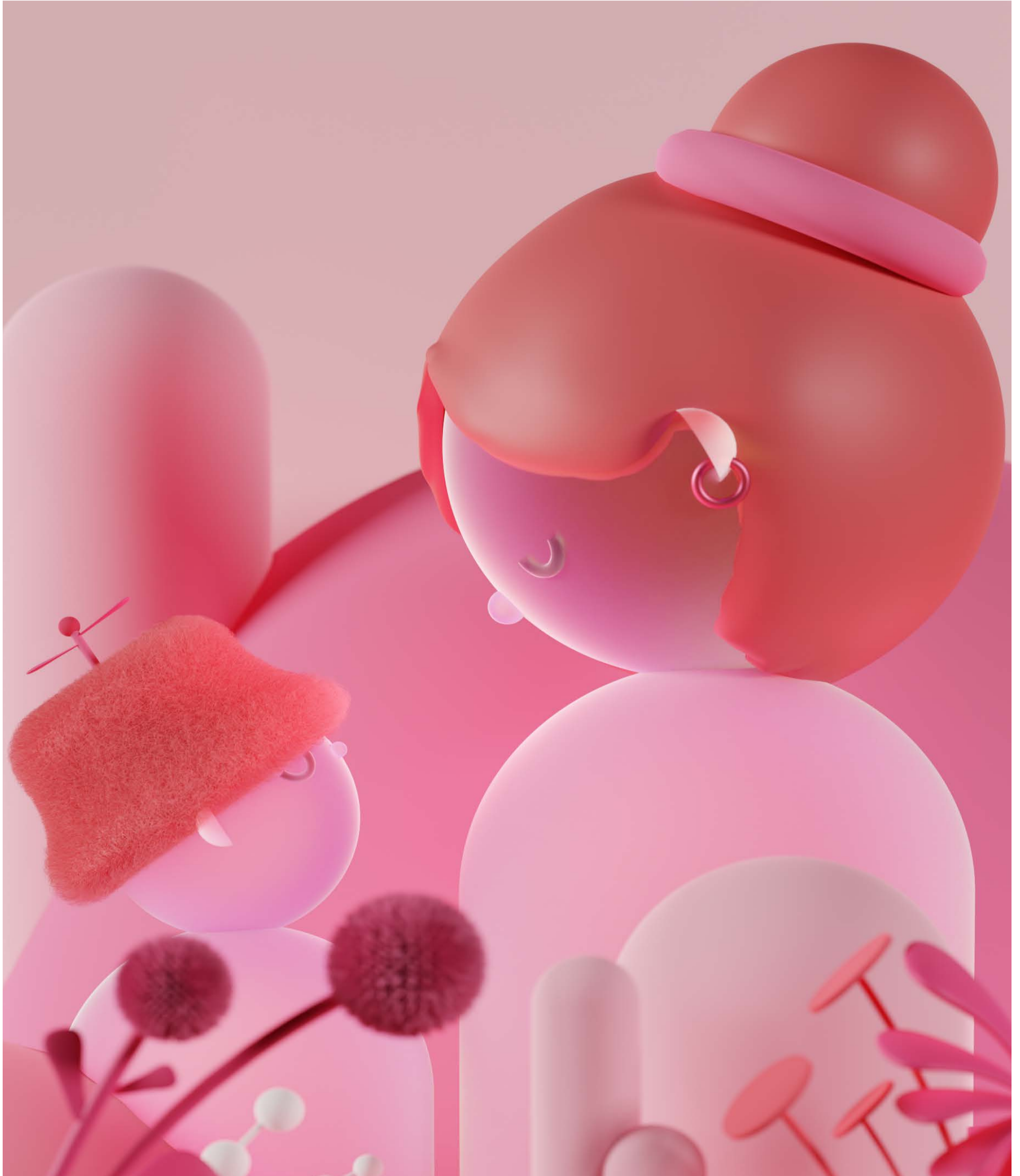

THE MOTHERS PAGES

FIRST AND ONLY ISSUE

LARA DALLY
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An editorial and illustrative exploration of single motherhood and the struggles that have attached to it. Exploring both the historical and current struggles, 'The Mother's Pages' is dedicated to spotlighting the experience of the single mother.





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The historical demonization of single mothers in history

The influence of Ancient Greece on modern society is undeniable, with its contributions to democracy, mathematics, and trial by jury. However, it is intriguing to examine the limited value placed on female independence, particularly within the realm of motherhood. Ancient Greece showcases some of the earliest forms of control against women's sexuality, with desire exclusively sought by husbands who were free to explore their own sexual desires beyond marriage. But the consequences for wives caught in affairs were dire, often leading to punishment and even the execution of their partners.

Moreover, Ancient Greece also offers a glimpse into the early demonization of single mothers, specifically unmarried women with children. The concept of the "legitimate" child originated in this era, where marriage was deemed essential for procreation and raising children. Consequently, women who found themselves with children but had not entered into marriage were cast out of society and subjected to shame and disgrace.

Transitioning to the Middle Ages, single mothers continued to face immense difficulties, largely due to the influence of the church. The shame associated with illegitimate children persisted, perpetuating a cycle of public humiliation, gossip, and societal ostracization for unwed mothers. The church played a significant role during this period, establishing strict gender roles and imposing harsh expectations, particularly on women. While women faced instant shaming for any perceived sexual misconduct, men often escaped scrutiny and consequences for their actions.

The plight of single mothers during this era was marked by public shame, social isolation, poverty, and even sexual exploitation. Even during the infamous witch trials, single mothers and their illegitimate children were subjected to public speculation, persecution, and execution.

The Victorian era brought its own set of challenges for single mothers, primarily due to prevailing Victorian attitudes. Single motherhood was associated with immorality and sin, with the belief that even the children of single mothers inherited their supposed immorality. Families often forced unmarried mothers within their ranks to alienate themselves, living in poverty and hardship, with many facing starvation. As in previous periods, men continued to evade scrutiny, as laws and clauses such as the "Bastardy Clause" legally absolved fathers of any responsibility for their children, leaving the burden of their livelihood solely on the mothers.

However, by the end of the Victorian Era, signs of social reform began to emerge, offering a glimmer of hope for single mothers. Some forms of financial aid were introduced, albeit at minimal levels barely enough for survival. While these reforms were modest, they represented a shift towards recognizing the struggles faced by single mothers and taking small steps towards providing assistance.

The history of oppression faced by single mothers throughout these periods serves as a stark reminder of the societal biases and challenges they have confronted. Understanding this historical context allows us to appreciate the progress that has been made and the work that still lies ahead in creating a more equitable and compassionate society that supports and uplifts single mothers in their journey.

The Cost of living crisis

The cost of living crisis is hitting single mothers particularly hard, as they struggle to make ends meet and provide for their families in the face of rising prices and stagnant wages. From the high cost of housing to the rising cost of healthcare and childcare, single mothers are facing a range of challenges that are making it increasingly difficult for them to thrive and succeed.

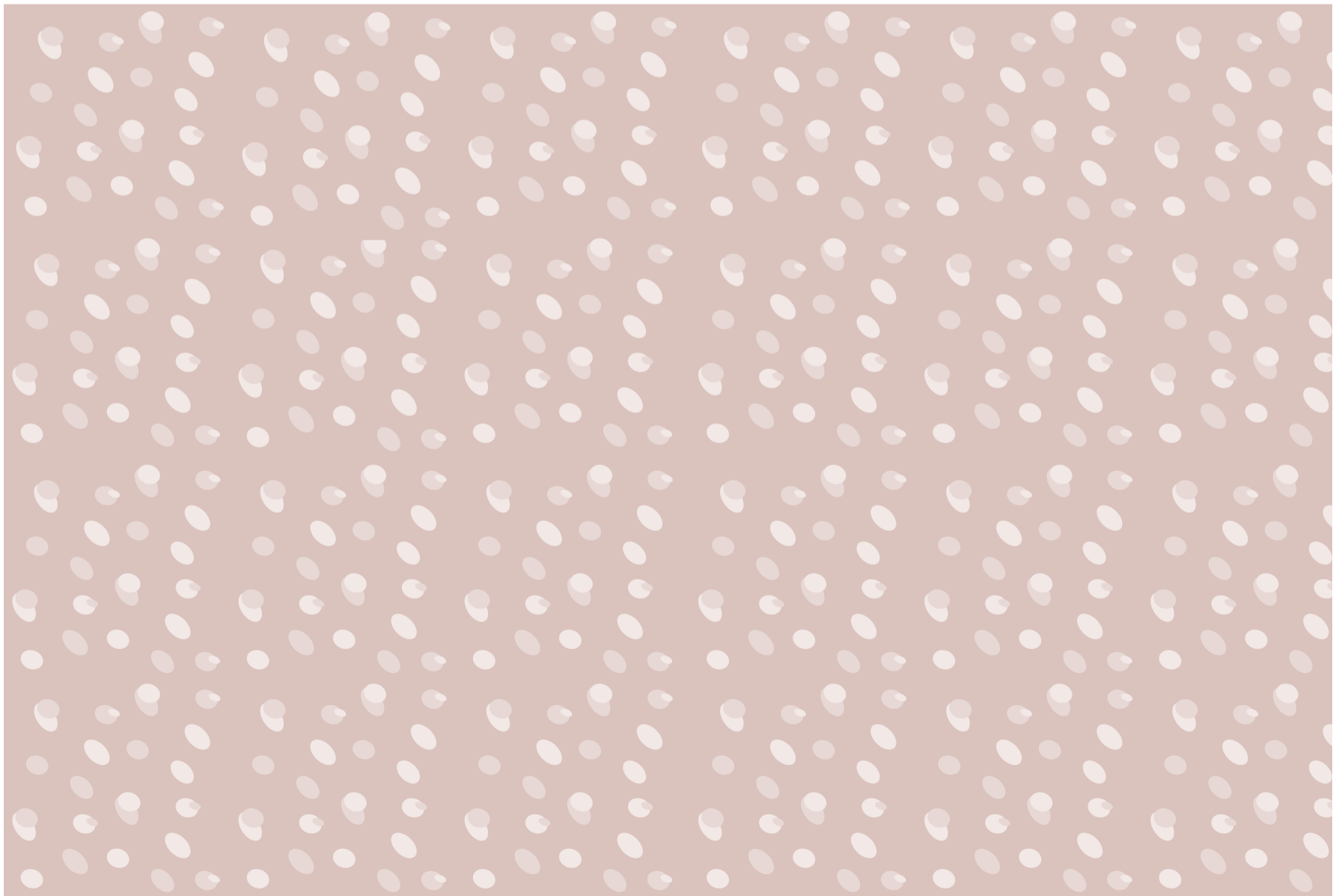
One of the biggest challenges facing single mothers today is the high cost of housing. In many parts of the country, rents and home prices have skyrocketed, making it nearly impossible for single mothers to find affordable housing for themselves and their children. This can lead to overcrowding, homelessness, and other serious problems, as single mothers are forced to make difficult choices about where and how to live.

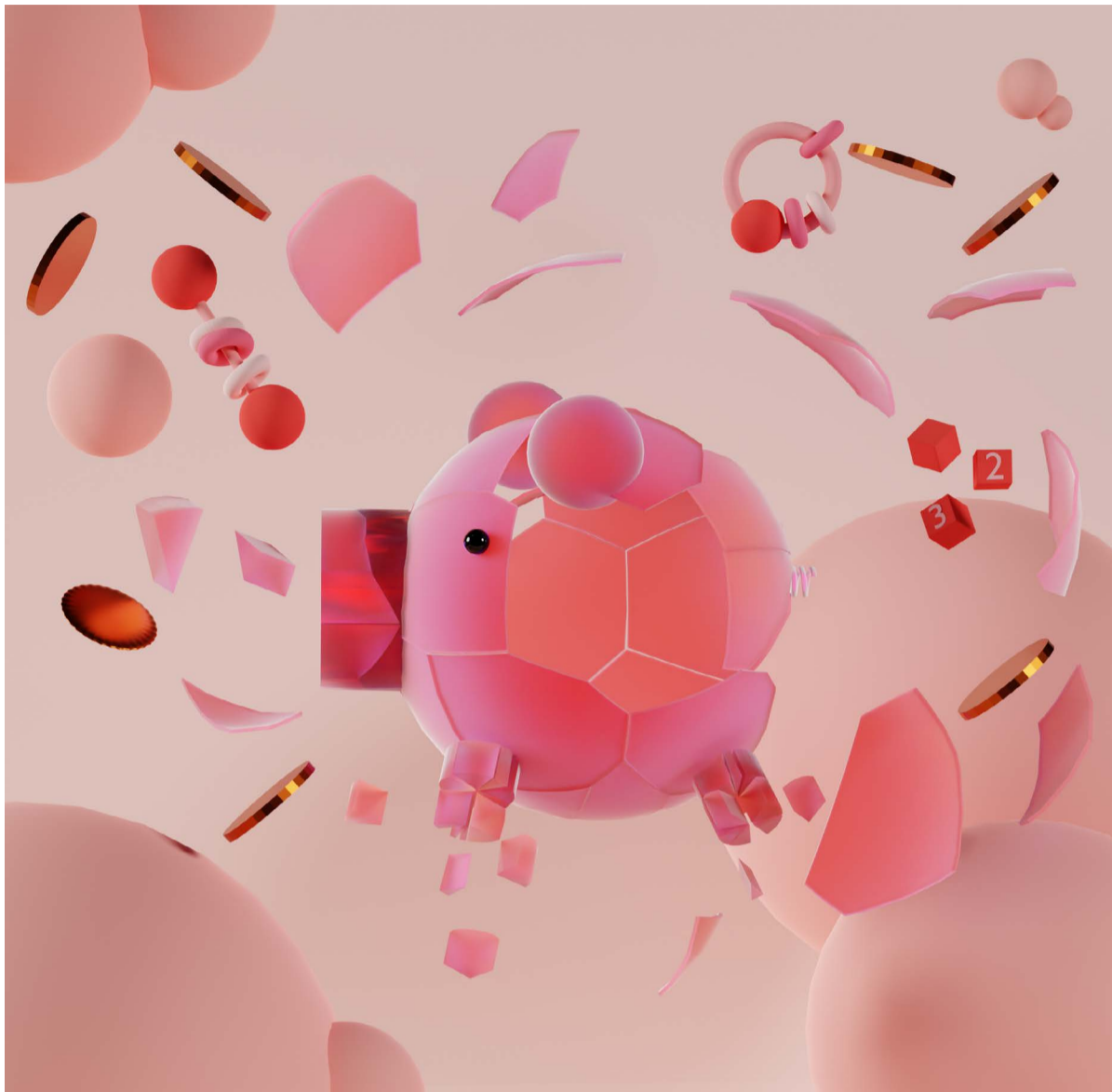
Another major challenge facing single mothers is the rising cost of healthcare. With the cost of health insurance and medical care continuing to climb, many single mothers are struggling to afford the care that they and their children need. This can lead to untreated illnesses and other health problems, as single mothers are forced to choose between paying for healthcare and meeting other basic needs.

Childcare is another major expense for single mothers, as they struggle to find affordable and high-quality care for their children while they work. The cost of childcare can be prohibitively high, making it difficult for single mothers to earn enough money to support their families. This can lead to a cycle of poverty and financial insecurity, as single mothers struggle to make ends meet and provide for their children.

In addition to these challenges, single mothers also face discrimination and bias in the workplace, which can make it difficult for them to advance their careers and earn a living wage. Single mothers are often overlooked for promotions and job opportunities, and they may be subject to lower pay and fewer benefits than their male counterparts. This can make it difficult for them to support themselves and their families, and it can lead to a sense of frustration and despair.

Despite these challenges, however, single mothers are finding ways to overcome adversity and thrive in the face of the cost of living crisis. They are forming support networks and community groups, advocating for policy changes and social programs that can help them to succeed, and finding creative ways to make ends meet and provide for their families. Through their resilience and determination, single mothers are showing us all what it means to be strong, capable, and resourceful in the face of adversity.





Balancing work and childcare becomes an overwhelming struggle, as the cost of living crisis intensifies.

The cost of living crisis has brought about significant challenges for people worldwide as they grapple with the escalating costs of daily necessities. However, it is crucial to recognize that single mothers have been disproportionately affected by this crisis. With the burden of being the sole earner in their households and the financial responsibilities that come with raising children, single mothers are facing an uphill battle, often with their voices silenced and overlooked in the media.

The additional costs of running a single-parent household, particularly the expenses related to childcare and housing, pose significant hurdles for any single parent. As the cost of living crisis continues to escalate, the housing market follows suit, making it increasingly difficult for many single parents to keep up with the rising costs. The statistics on the struggle faced by dual-earner households serve as a testament to the immense difficulty that single mothers are currently experiencing.

The rising costs of essential items like food and fuel further exacerbate the financial strain on households, pushing them perilously close to the brink of poverty. For single mothers, this stress becomes even more worrisome, as they bear the sole responsibility of providing for their families while grappling with the relentless rise in prices.

Furthermore, single mothers face additional challenges in maintaining a career and finding stable employment.

The workplace often exhibits biases against single parents, and single mothers, in particular, may encounter obstacles that hinder their professional growth. Balancing work and childcare becomes an overwhelming struggle, as the cost of living crisis intensifies. Not only does this present an additional financial burden, but it also restricts the time and energy available to devote to work and career opportunities, further perpetuating the cycle of financial instability.

To shed light on the struggles faced by single mothers, it is imperative to consider the evidence and statistics that underscore their predicament. Studies consistently show that single mothers have higher poverty rates compared to other demographic groups, highlighting the systemic challenges they face. The gender pay gap, coupled with the rising costs of living, intensifies the economic hardships experienced by single mothers.

In conclusion, the cost of living crisis has placed an immense burden on individuals worldwide, but single mothers have borne the brunt of these challenges. Their status as single earners and the financial obligations tied to raising children have left them grappling with increasing costs, often with their voices marginalized and unheard. Recognizing and addressing these issues is vital to fostering a more equitable society that supports and uplifts single mothers in the face of the cost of living crisis.



Interview with a single mother

Have you seen any big changes for single mothers over generations, from family stories to personal experiences, what have been the major differences or even similarities?

Huge changes for single mothers over generations: my grandmother lost her husband in the war and had to raise two daughters by herself in a post-war world full of hardship, without nurseries or support, unmarried women could not act freely as men could, e.g. open a bank account without the husband's expressed permission, rent a flat etc. Marrying was the only way to get out of the parent's house. My mother became a widow, and there was very little support for her available. Entering a new relationship might have seemed the only option to 'get by'. And I noticed that thought in myself too. 'Wouldn't it be nice to have a partner to share?' But I didn't have to. I came to England because it was easy to find a nursery, so that I could go to work and care for us. I could open a bank account, rent a flat, go to work and wasn't frowned upon. My employer didn't mind that I had a child and was happy to make some adjustments so that I could take my daughter to the nursery in the morning.

I wasn't and never felt like an outcast because I had a child and no husband. It would have been very shameful in my mother's time. But by now, it had become 'the new normal' in my family, that we would raise our children without a partner or husband. I had it a lot easier compared to my ancestors.

Do you feel you have ever encountered bias due to single motherhood?

I was told (exclusively by men) that I would break my neck, fail, run into misery and hardship in all aspects etc. if I went down the single motherhood route and did not have a partner in my life. Women were generally a lot more understanding and supportive, at least in their words not always their deeds. Some women though were dismissive and condescending, perhaps jealous or - I sometimes had the impression - they felt threatened. The truth is, that I heard and felt what others said, but it never really affected what I knew and felt was the right thing to do. You can become very compromise-averse when it is about your independence and ultimately your child's well-being.

What are some things that you are grateful for due to single motherhood?

I am grateful for the strength I was given and the opportunities to develop personally and interpersonally, to learn and grow from taking responsibility. Not always getting it right and I am sure I messed up some things, but I always learned from it, and I am working on improving and becoming a better person and mother.

Single motherhood has been prevalent in our family, have there been any traits and values established and born from this?

Definitely! Both, negative and positive. On the positive side, I would say that women in our family have developed a high level of independence, inner and outer strength, resilience and self-reliance.

Have there been any that you have been frustrated by? Whenever the mother is blamed and shamed, e.g. 'she got herself into this' etc.

And that single mothers and their children are often described as a particular 'risk factor'. This might be true looking at statistics, but would that also be the case if single mothers had the appropriate support and is it fair to generalise that? Does this preconceived perception not make it even harder for women to raise their children?

Do you wish there was more media coverage on single motherhood? Do you think there should be more stories and coverage about the current cost of living crisis for current single mothers with young children?

This is a double-edged sword. We are already bombarded with coverage of the cost of living crisis for the majority of the population. Occasionally, we hear about the huge profits that energy and water suppliers, supermarkets etc. make. Some high-ranking managers have to give up their 500K bonuses for gross misconduct or damages to the environment that they caused. If we want to create a truly inclusive society, this structural injustice and imbalance have to be resolved. These exorbitant and unjustified profits should go back into society where they are needed, for example into the hands of single mothers with small children.

Is there anything unexpected or not well-appreciated or known about single motherhood from people who haven't experienced it personally?

I wonder if people realise the enormous emotional, mental and physical work single mothers do. Not only for their family unit, but to society as a whole.

I feel that the saying 'it takes a village to raise a child' is so very true, and integrating this mentality would not only ease the challenges of single motherhood, but benefit the community as a whole.



The research and project were inspired by the women in my family. I hope this magazine has helped generate a similar admiration. If you like my work please check out my work through the QR code

