# More than half of UK adults see The Handmaid’s Tale as a reflection of women’s rights today



# The Handmaid's Tale: A Dystopian Reflection on Today's Society

As the sixth and final season of Channel 4's acclaimed series *The Handmaid's Tale* premiered, a striking new study revealed that over half of adults in the UK perceive current societal trends as eerily reminiscent of the dystopian nightmares depicted in the show. The series, based on Margaret Atwood's seminal 1985 novel, portrays a totalitarian regime known as Gilead, where women are objectified and reduced to state property for reproductive purposes—a theme that resonates deeply amid today's sociopolitical climate.

The research, commissioned by Channel 4, found that 56 per cent of Britons believe modern challenges faced by women mirror those of the characters in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Furthermore, 47 per cent expressed concerns that women’s rights are inadequately safeguarded in the current political landscape. This anxious sentiment reflects widespread disillusionment, particularly in light of recent events such as state-level restrictions on abortion and an alarming rise in violence against women.

In a time when the UK recorded over one million violent crimes against women in just one year—accounting for nearly 20 per cent of all police-registered criminal activity—Amber Kirby, Director of Marketing at Channel 4, articulated that the final season is intended as a "rallying cry against oppression." She stated that the show's creators aim to catalyse essential conversations around the very real struggles women encounter today.

The show's producers hark back to when they first began filming in 2016, shortly after Donald Trump's election, reflecting on how the series has unexpectedly maintained its relevance. Showrunner Eric Tuchman noted that the programme serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of power misuse, stating, "Women in our country have fewer rights now than when we started production." The sentiment encapsulates a growing frustration among many, especially following significant developments like the US Supreme Court's recent decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, effectively stripping away constitutional protections for abortion rights.

While *The Handmaid's Tale* is primarily a work of fiction, it draws dire parallels to contemporary issues. For instance, the influence of technology on women’s reproductive rights is increasingly concerning. Privacy violations have compounded the challenges women face, with data collected by pregnancy and period tracking apps becoming potential tools for legal action against women seeking abortions. Advocates are pushing for legislation, such as California's proposed AB254, which aims to protect sensitive personal data to mitigate risks posed by law enforcement and other agencies.

Amid these social upheavals, Margaret Atwood herself has warned about the potential repercussions of climate change, which could exacerbate existing gender inequalities and empower authoritarian regimes. As extreme weather events and social unrest become more frequent, the ramifications could push women's rights further into peril. According to Atwood, the forthcoming battles may not only be against political figures but also against the existential threats posed by a changing planet.

While *The Handmaid's Tale* unerringly illustrates the struggles surrounding women's autonomy, it also joins a larger conversation about reproductive justice intertwined with climate justice. Scholars advocate for frameworks that consider the intersection of environmental and reproductive issues, highlighting the necessity for solutions that account for racial health disparities and future generations.

As viewers tune in to witness the final chapters of June Osborne’s journey, the cultural resonance of *The Handmaid's Tale* serves as a poignant reminder of ongoing issues plaguing society. The legacy of Atwood's narrative continues to incite necessary discourse about power, rights, and the realities women face—both in fiction and in their everyday lives.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/handmaids-tale-current-politics-research-b2747143.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/handmaids-tale-current-politics-research-b2747143.html), [[4]](https://newrepublic.com/post/186875/georgia-restores-six-week-abortion-ban)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/openforum/article/reproductive-rights-california-tech-17925695.php)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/handmaids-tale-current-politics-research-b2747143.html), [[6]](https://wires.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wcc.860)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/margaret-atwood-women-will-bear-brunt-of-dystopian-climate-future)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/15274764231180312)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/handmaids-tale-current-politics-research-b2747143.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/openforum/article/reproductive-rights-california-tech-17925695.php> - This article discusses how big tech companies are undermining women's reproductive rights in California and beyond. It highlights the role of pregnancy and period tracker apps, which collect sensitive personal data that could be used against women seeking abortions. The piece emphasizes the need for legislation to protect personal data on reproductive health, such as California's AB254, to prevent misuse by law enforcement and other entities.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/margaret-atwood-women-will-bear-brunt-of-dystopian-climate-future> - Margaret Atwood, author of 'The Handmaid's Tale,' predicts that women will be directly and adversely affected by climate change. She foresees extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and social unrest leading to conflicts and totalitarian regimes, all of which will disproportionately impact women and children, exacerbating existing gender inequalities.
4. <https://newrepublic.com/post/186875/georgia-restores-six-week-abortion-ban> - The Georgia Supreme Court reinstated a law banning abortion after six weeks of pregnancy, before many people know they are pregnant. A Fulton County Superior Judge had previously overturned the law, warning that it could lead to a dystopian world similar to 'The Handmaid’s Tale.' The reinstatement of the ban has sparked concerns about women's reproductive rights in the state.
5. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/15274764231180312> - This article analyzes Hulu's adaptation of 'The Handmaid’s Tale,' exploring how the series portrays reproduction and motherhood. It critiques the adaptation for domesticating Margaret Atwood’s novel and presenting a conservative view of feminism, focusing on traditional white Anglo-Western mothers. The piece highlights the series' limited resistance and its alignment with neotraditional values.
6. <https://wires.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wcc.860> - This overview examines the intersection of climate justice and reproductive justice, discussing how climate change disproportionately affects reproductive rights. It reviews literature on both frameworks and analyzes approaches that link them, emphasizing the need for solutions that address racial health disparities and intergenerational justice in the context of climate change.
7. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2502.11086> - This paper introduces seven data ecofeminist principles for developing technological alternatives within the AI research context. It critiques the environmental impacts of generative AI models and advocates for ecofeminist algorithmic and infrastructural projects that prioritize social and environmental justice, calling for a reassessment of the current innovation race in AI.