

Study reveals gender bias of prospective parents

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A Queen's University study has found that when people think about having children, men want boys and women want girls.

"Gender neutrality - a lack of preference - is now a standard cultural norm embraced within most wealthy [developed countries](#) like Canada," says Lonnie Aarssen, a Queen's biology professor and co-author of the study. His results, though, reveal a strong [gender bias](#), despite the researchers' prediction that they would find evidence of a well-established contemporary culture of gender neutrality.

As a way of explaining these findings, Dr. Aarssen says the results are consistent with the notion that people have a strong intrinsic desire to leave something of themselves behind, a "meme", for the future. "Our results show that men today envision this through sons while women visualize it through daughters."

Historically, Dr. Aarssen says both men and women indicated a strong preference for sons, and this has evolutionary roots connected with the fact that males have a nearly limitless capacity to father future [offspring](#) and advance the family line. "Now that women are empowered like never before in history, they are free to anticipate and realize their vision for legacy, expressly through opportunities now more widely available to their own gender," he says.

The study was published in the *Open [Anthropology](#) Journal*.

Provided by Queen's University

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