

## **Are women equal yet?**

In the developed world pressure groups to advance equal opportunities for women have driven political policies to place gender equality into law.

### **The UK Acts Giving Gender Equality**

#### **Married Women's Property Act 1882**

A married woman shall, in accordance with the provisions of this Act, be capable of acquiring, holding, and disposing by will or otherwise, of any real or personal property as her separate property, in the same manner as if she were a feme sole, without the intervention of any trustee.

#### **Representation of the People Act 1918**

In 1918 the Representation of the People Act was passed which allowed women over the age of 30 who met a property qualification to vote. Although 8.5 million women met this criteria, it was only about two-thirds of the total population of women in the UK.

#### **Sex Discrimination Act 1975**

An Act to render unlawful certain kinds of sex discrimination and discrimination on the ground of marriage, and establish a Commission with the function of working towards the elimination of such discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity between men and women generally; and for related purposes.

## **Women Experience in the UK**

#### **The first woman MP**

- The first woman to be elected to the Commons was Constance Markievicz, in the general election of 1918. However as a member of Sinn Fein, she did not take her seat.
- The first woman to take her seat in parliament was Nancy Astor (Viscountess Astor), after a by-election in December 1919. She was elected as a Conservative for the Plymouth Sutton constituency after her husband, Waldorf Astor, the former MP, was elevated to the peerage.

#### **The first female British Prime Minister**

Baroness Margaret Thatcher, the 'Iron Lady', was the first female British Prime Minister elected in 1979 and the longest serving PM for over 150 years.

- Elected 60 years after getting the vote and first MP elected.
- Two female Prime Ministers out of the last seven.

#### **Security Service – The first female Director General**

Dame Stella Rimington was the first woman to become Director General of the Security Service on her appointment in 1992.

#### **The Army - The first woman to command New College at Sandhurst**

Lt Col Lucy Giles appointed 2015.

### **First female Police Officer**

Officer Edith Smith was appointed in 1915 in the United Kingdom with full power of arrest.

- The British television drama series “WPC 56”, broadcast on BBC One. The stories feature the first woman police constables (WPC) to join Brinford Constabulary in 1956.
  - In it shows how they were treated by the male colleagues (asked to make tea and do other menial tasks).

### **Senior Woman Police Officers**

- Pauline Clare was the first woman Chief Constable. Appointed by the Lancashire Constabulary on 14 June 1995.
- Dame Cressida Rose Dick DBE QPM in 2017 was appointed Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service in London (the most Senior Police Officer).
  - Appointed 100years after first policewomen.
  - She also has broken convention by having a female partner.

### **Women in Higher Education Management**

- Women form 56.5% of the student body,
- Make up 53.8% of the whole workforce
- Occupy 45% of academic jobs in higher education in the United Kingdom.
- Their representation declines dramatically at senior management levels, where only 27.5% of managers are women.
- In vice-chancellor and principal roles, this is even lower: only 17% are women.

### **Women CEOs in UK Corporations**

- Emma Walmsley: GlaxoSmithKline
- Liv Garfield: Severn Trent
- Carolyn McCall: ITV
- Alison Brittain: Whitbread
- Alison Rose: Royal Bank of Scotland Group

## **UK Women Equality Party**

Every day in the UK women face inequality at home, at work, in politics and in public life.

That makes the UK a worse place to live for everybody.

Although women make up 51 per cent of the population, they are only:

- 29 per cent of MPs,
- 25 per cent of judges
- 24 per cent of FTSE 100 directors.
- This means that in politics, the law and in business, women's voices are not getting heard.

Women still occupy the lowest-paid jobs –

- three-quarters of the people who've done minimum wage jobs in the last 10 years are women.

- Working women earn 81p for every pound a man earns
  - at the current rate it will be 70 years before that gap eventually closes.
- Around 1.2 million women suffer domestic abuse a year:
- every day - there are 250 rapes or attempted rapes.
    - Conviction rates are low.

Women are represented in adverts and the media as sex objects and victims, rather than individuals with ambitions and ideas.

Our children are held back by the limits imposed on them by gender stereotypes.

## **THE NORDIC WAY**

### **The 'paradox' of working in the world's most equal countries**

Glass ceilings

Strong progress has been made in the public sector; in Sweden more women than men currently hold management positions in this sphere. In politics, 46% of Swedish members of parliament are women, while the proportion in other Nordic countries is around 40%.

However, there are still surprisingly few women in senior private sector roles. Just 28% of managers in Denmark are female, rising to 32% in Finland and Norway, and 36% in Sweden, according to a report by independent think tank The Cato Institute in 2018. Iceland is the highest-scoring Nordic country, with 40%. But that is still three points behind the US, where 43% of managers are women, despite the US ranking just 51 in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap index.

Strong concerns about this disparity were raised last year in The Nordic Gender Effect at Work, a report from the Nordic Council of Ministers, an advisory body. The writers found "a troubling pattern" in businesses - "the higher up the hierarchy you look, the more men you will see".

## **United Nations**

### **The unfinished business of our time**

- Women and girls represent half of the world's population and, therefore, also half of its potential.
- Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development.
- Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth.
- Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go to achieve full equality of rights and opportunities between men and women, warns UN Women.

## **Summery**

- Women in the UK had essentially gained legal equality by 1975. It was reinforced by the Human Rights Act 1998.
- Legal equality has not translated into equal opportunities in any country including the most egalitarian Scandinavian Countries.
- Social norms and behaviour will have to change to reflect legal equality and achieve Gender Equality.
- Variable progress has been made in each country and in some countries it is questionable if any progress has been made.

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