

The Suffragettes

In 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst formed the Women's Social and Political Union, known now as the suffragettes. The suffragettes' motto was 'deeds, not words'. They were determined to get women the right to vote and were prepared to use any means necessary to do so. They smashed windows on London's Oxford Street; set fire to churches; chained themselves to the gates of Buckingham Palace; went on hunger strike in prison; and sailed the Thames in order to shout abuse through loud hailers at Parliament whilst MPs met.

In 1918, as a result of the suffragettes' campaigns, the Representation of the People Act was passed. This law gave women over 30 years old with £5 of property (about £275 in today's money) the right to vote. These restrictions led to 8.4million newly enfranchised women. A separate Act in 1918 gave women the right to run for parliament.

In 1928, the Equal Franchise Act gave all women over the age of 21 the right to vote, regardless of property ownership. Today, all women over the age of 18 can vote.



Dagenham Strike

In 1968, women sewing machinists at Ford Motors' factory in Dagenham went on strike because they were being paid less for their work than their male equivalents. This kind of treatment was commonplace at the time. The sewing machinists' strike gained widespread attention. It led to an equal pay protest in London's Trafalgar Square in 1969 attended by over 1,000 people. The biggest result of the strike was the Equal Pay Act of 1970, a law that banned less favourable treatment, pay, or conditions being afforded to women or men in any workplace. This law now exists in the form of the Equality Act 2010.

Women in the Army

In 2016, women were allowed to serve in combat roles in the UK army for the first time. Women have been formally involved in the UK army for a long time but, prior to just two years ago, their work had been limited to supporting roles. Originally, women provided physical and emotional support for men through nursing or culinary roles. In World War One a women's volunteer service that took on military support roles was formed (though after the war it was soon disbanded); and in World War Two an official women's branch of the army was permanently formed. By the end of the war, 190,000 women were a part of the British army. Since WW2, the women's branch of the army has been merged into the army in general. Multiple women died in the relatively recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars, but all of these women were serving in support roles and not combat positions.

Bedford College

In 1849, Elizabeth Jesser Reid used a private inheritance to set-up Bedford College in London, the first all-women's higher education institution. Though women could study here, the college had no degree awarding powers. In 1878, The University of London became the first UK university to award degrees to women. Four female students obtained degrees in 1880—all of them were students from Bedford College. In 1900, Bedford College became an official constituent of the University of London. In the 1960s, the college became mixed sex. In the 1980s, it merged with Royal Holloway College, the name it is now known by.

Women's Football

During World War 1, women's football teams emerged from munitions factories. Initially, women's football became a spectacle for charity events, but as the war went on, women's football became more formalised. We know this because the "Munitionettes' Cup" was launched in August 1917. On Boxing Day, 1920, Dick Kerr Ladies FC from Preston played St Helen's Ladies at Goodison Park in Liverpool; 53,000 people came to watch. Despite this, after the war, gender stereotypes began to aggressively reassert themselves, and in 1921 The FA called on all of its member-clubs to refuse their grounds for women's football matches. This ban lasted for 50 years, until 1971. In 1966, England won the world cup, sparking a renewed interest from female groups in football. Five years of a movement to initiate an all-female national team finally led to the lifting of the FA's ban.

Women in Hollywood

In 2010, Kathryn Bigelow became the first woman to win the Academy Award (or Oscar) for best director. Only five women have ever been nominated. The award was inaugurated in 1929 and has run continuously since then. No black women (or men) have ever been given the award. Oscar nominees and winner are decided by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, an organisation of 5,7883 voters. As of 2018, 94% of these voters are white, 77% are male, and 54% are over the age of sixty.

