

Step 2: Learning more about the context and topic

Step 2 Part 1: Gender (In)Equality in History

Students discuss gender (in)equality as an all time, worldwide phenomenon, using the fact sheets about gender (in)equality throughout history.

They will also analyse the timeline of women's activism and emancipation during the last two centuries to be aware of the consequences and impact of these movements. Students will also learn about historical examples of gender (in)equality and identify different types of gender (in)equality and the consequences these have had throughout history.

Introduction

The objective of this part is to teach students more about the history of gender (in)equality in order to better understand the context of the starter clip, and the different ways of dealing with the topic. By studying the topic as a worldwide phenomenon, students will learn to identify instances of gender (in)equality and its consequences in different contexts. At the end of the lesson, students will be asked to discuss examples of solutions and legislation to improve gender (in)equality.

Lesson Objectives

- Students will learn to understand how people have been dealing with gender (in)equality in the past.
- Students will have group discussions about gender (in)equality as an all time, worldwide phenomenon, using fact sheets on different types of gender (in)equality throughout history.
- Students will draw some conclusions about similarities and differences between these forms of gender (in)equality throughout history.
- Students will analyse the timeline on women's activism which includes key moments of women's emancipation during the last two centuries in order to be aware of the intentions and real actions taken by governments, and of the consequences they have had on the position of women in today's societies.

Preparation

In these lessons we provide you with a lot of materials. You are free to make choices in the historical assignments; use some texts instead of all or divide the assignments between the students. Choose which of the fact sheets you would like to use for discussion.

Note: some texts are easier to read than others. If needed, you can use the following student materials for students who struggle with reading English:

- Fact Sheet Gender in religion
- Fact sheet Map of political rights
- Fact sheet Homophobia: Alan Turing
- Fact Sheet #MeToo
- Fact sheet Graphs on inequality in payment
- Fact sheet Inequality in sports
- Fact sheet Inequality in the arts

Materials

Student materials

- A selection of Fact Sheets with examples of gender (in)equality
- Timeline Women of the World Unite!
- Distinction between Sex and Gender

Teacher material

- 30+ Fact Sheets with examples of gender (in)equality

Description of the lesson

1. Introducing the topic on gender (in)equality in recent history

Ask students and discuss as a class the following questions:

- Can you think of examples of gender (in)equality in recent history?
- How has Europe recently been dealing with gender (in)equality?

2. Class discussion

Group discussion of the fact sheet examples (model: expert).

Discuss examples of legislation to improve gender (in)equality.

Material: Factsheets with examples of gender (in)equality

1. Gender in religion

Religions historically played a key part in defining gender roles. Europe's most important religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - are believed to have been founded by men. These religions all have rules and commands related to gender:

- Segregation of men and women in the synagogue and mosque
- Separate catholic congregations for men and women
- Leaders such as rabbis, priests and imams must be men
- Dress codes, mainly for women
- Different duties for husbands (leader, protector and supporter of the family) and wives (follower, mother, helper, keeper of the house)
- Duty to have children for both wife and husband. Therefore, homosexuality is strictly forbidden.
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2. Enlightened Women

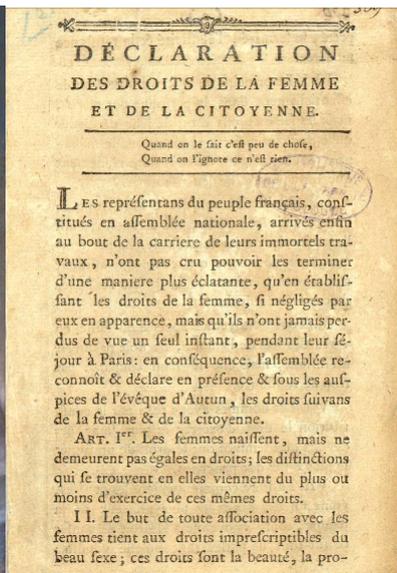


[john opie / wikipedia](#)

Mary Wollstonecraft

During the 18th century Enlightenment, intellectuals started to question the authority of religion over society. Some women also joined the discussion. In her *A Vindication of the rights of women*, English writer Mary Wollstonecraft made an indictment against the authority of men over women. She wrote that women were equal to men in ability. In her view, men accomplished more in society because it was much more difficult for women to get a good education. Once women would be educated as well as men, they would be able to have their own independent lives: "I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves." The publication of *A Vindication* caused considerable controversy but failed to bring about any immediate reforms.

In 1789, revolutionaries in France drew up the Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen. In it, they demanded political rights and freedoms for men: male men. As a response, Olympe des Gouges, a woman deeply involved in cultural and political debate, wrote the Declaration of Rights for Woman and the Female Citizen (1791). The first article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen proclaims: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility." The first article of the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen responds: "Women are born free and remain equal to men in rights. Social distinctions may only be based on common utility." During the Reign of Terror (1793-1794), Des Gouges was tried and executed for her political writings.



[alexander kucharsky / wikipedia](#)

Olympe des Gouges

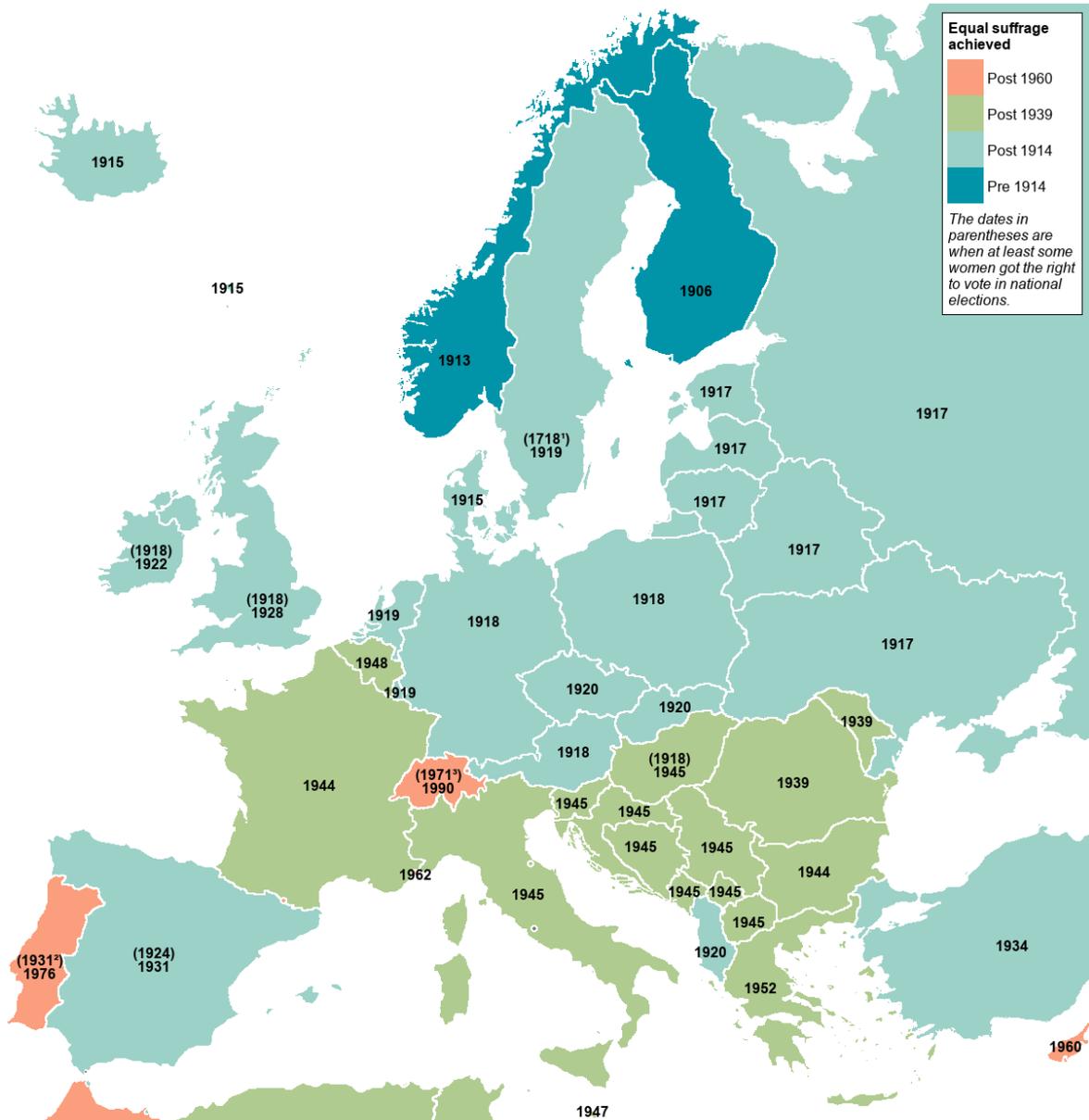
[université de toulouse](#)

Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen

3. Political Rights

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN EUROPE

dates when women got equal voting rights to men



¹ Swedish women who were taxpaying guild members could vote during the Age of Liberty (1718-1772).
² Portuguese women were also accidentally enfranchised in 1911 but the law was changed to prevent this in 1913.
³ Swiss women got full federal voting rights in 1971, but were only fully enfranchised at the Canton level in 1990.

/u/Udzu

© unknown / reddit

4. Women's Suffrage in Finland

historiana.eu



Women representatives at the Finnish parliament in 1907

In 1884, the Finnish Women's Association was established. One of their main goals was to secure women's rights to vote. Initially, the association sparked controversy among other groups of women. Bourgeois women were not convinced that working class women should have a right to vote. Because of this sharp dispute, the women's vote became a central issue in the political debate. During the General Strike in 1905, Finns decided that a radical solution was needed and the vote for women became one of the strikers' demands.

In 1905, Finland passed the right to vote and stand for election for both women and men. It thereby became the first nation in Europe to allow women as parliamentary candidates, and the first to adopt universal suffrage. In the following year, women were first elected as members of the Finnish parliament: 19 women were elected out of a total of 200 representatives.

5. Revolution!

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia can be considered one of the great egalitarian social experiments of the 20th century and therefore would seem like a good place to look for gender equality.

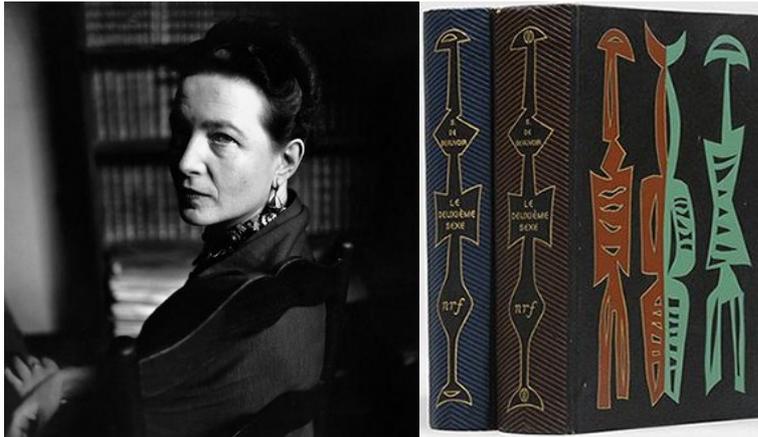
During the first years after the Revolution, there were a lot of radical ideas about equality and some were put into practice. After 1917, new social insurance laws were passed to ensure women's equal rights - including the world's first state-funded maternity leave policy. Additionally, ambitious plans were made in the 1920s for public day care centers, laundries, and cafeterias that would liberate women from the "crushing drudgery" (Lenin's phrase) of housework and release them into the workforce. Nevertheless, the Soviets left bourgeois family structures and traditional gender roles largely in place, and laws on the books to support women did little to undermine patriarchy.

Lots has been written about the position of women in the Soviet Union, but plans for real equality were sabotaged and suppressed from the start. Bolshevism was a "men's movement," and this contributed to its demise. By failing to liberate women from the domestic sphere, the Bolsheviks inadvertently preserved the system they wanted to destroy. For, "women produced children; women and children formed families; and families 'engendered capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a massive scale.'"

6. Economic, legal and social rights

After World War II, a lot changed for women in Europe. Girls were allowed to the same educational levels as boys, women could stand witness in court, married women were granted their own separate economy and could work in more professions. But there was still a lot of inequality left to fight against.

7. The Second Sex



© abebooks / wikipedia

© women in history
Simone de Beauvoir

The Second Sex (Le Deuxième Sexe) is a 1949 book by French writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in which she discusses the treatment of women throughout history and in her own time.

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” This is Beauvoir’s most famous quote. In the book she contrasts a girl’s upbringing with a boy’s, who at age 3 or 4 is told he is a “little man.” A girl is taught to be a woman, and her “feminine” destiny is imposed on her by society.

De Beauvoir asks: “What is woman?” She argues that the man is considered the ‘normal’ human being. In this way, the views of what a woman is, how she should behave or what she should look like, are determined by male standards.

De Beauvoir relates the history of women’s suffrage, and writes that women like Rosa Luxemburg and Marie Curie demonstrate that the idea of women's inferiority to men is false. What these examples also show is that history itself, being mainly written by men, pays little attention to brilliant women. In this way we get the impression that men have always been superior to women.

According to De Beauvoir, while a woman knows how to be as active, creative and effective as a man, her situation keeps her being useful, preparing food, clothes, and lodging.

De Beauvoir thinks it is pointless to try to decide whether a woman is superior or inferior, and that it is obvious that a man's situation in society is "infinitely preferable." She writes: "For a woman there is no other way out than to work for her liberation."

In her conclusion, De Beauvoir looks forward to a future in which women and men are equals, something the "Soviet revolution promised", but did not ever deliver.

The first French publication of *The Second Sex* in 1949 sold around 22,000 copies in a week. It has since been translated into 40 languages. The Vatican placed the book on its list of prohibited books.

The Second Sex is regarded as a major work of feminist philosophy and the starting point of second-wave feminism.

8. Physical autonomy

The second wave of women's liberation activity in Europe was a feminist movement that started in the 1960s and continued through the 1970s. Its aims were to redesign society by changing the perception of women and their roles in society.

In addition to improvements in working conditions and equal pay, liberationists fought for complete autonomy for women's bodies including the right to make their own decisions regarding contraception and abortion, and more independence in sexuality. The advocates of the movement felt that unfettered access to education jobs and childcare were primary issues.



sparnestad fotoarchief / wikipedia

Women demonstrate in The Hague for equal pay on May 29, 1975



bert verhoeff / wikipedia

Hunger strike in Ghent in support of abortion rights, 1973

The protests resulted in better legislation for women in European countries. Contraception became freely available, abortion was legalised, laws on violence and rape in marriage were passed, women could keep their own name after marriage, paternal prevalence over the children was abolished, honour killings and genital mutilation were prohibited. Laws on discrimination because of sex, marital status, pregnancy or sexual orientation were passed.

9. Sexual Harassment: #MeToo



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Despite improvements in legislation, not all problems were solved, as we can see in the starter clip about the subject of sexual harassment.

The Me Too (or #MeToo) movement, with a large variety of local and international names, is a movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault. Sexual harassment survivor and activist Tarana Burke initially used the phrase “Me Too” in this context on social media in 2006, on MySpace.

Similar to other social justice and empowerment movements based upon breaking silence, the purpose of “Me Too” is to empower women through empathy and strength in numbers, especially young and vulnerable women, by visibly demonstrating how many women have survived sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace.

Following the exposure of the widespread sexual abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein in early October 2017, the movement began to spread virally as a hashtag on social media. On October 15, 2017, American actress Alyssa Milano posted on Twitter: “If all the women who have been sexually harassed

or assaulted wrote 'Me Too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem,” saying that she got the idea from a friend. A number of high-profile posts and responses from American celebrities Gwyneth Paltrow, Ashley Judd, Jennifer Lawrence, and Uma Thurman, among others, soon followed.

After millions of people started using the phrase and hashtag in this manner, it spread to dozens of other languages and countries.

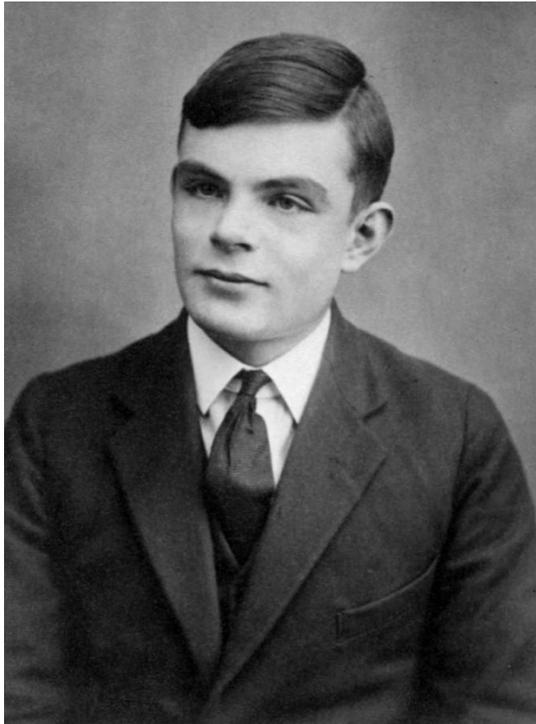
In her acceptance speech during the Golden Globe festivities, actress Michelle Williams made a strong plea (video) for the right of women to choose freely on any subject.

In February 2020, Harvey Weinstein was convicted of rape at a New York trial.

10. Homophobia

In Europe, homosexuals have been prosecuted for ages. In most religions, sexuality is centered around reproduction. Therefore, homosexuality has been regarded as not natural, not intended by god and thus forbidden.

The case of Alan Turing



turingarchive.org / [wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Turing)
Alan Turing at age 16

Alan Turing was a world famous mathematician and computer scientist. During World War II, he played a major role in deciphering the German Enigma code-messages, and thus helped shorten the war considerably. In 1952, Turing was persecuted for homosexual acts, which were a criminal offense in the U.K. at the time. Turing was found guilty and convicted to be chemically castrated. Turing died in 1954, probably because of suicide.

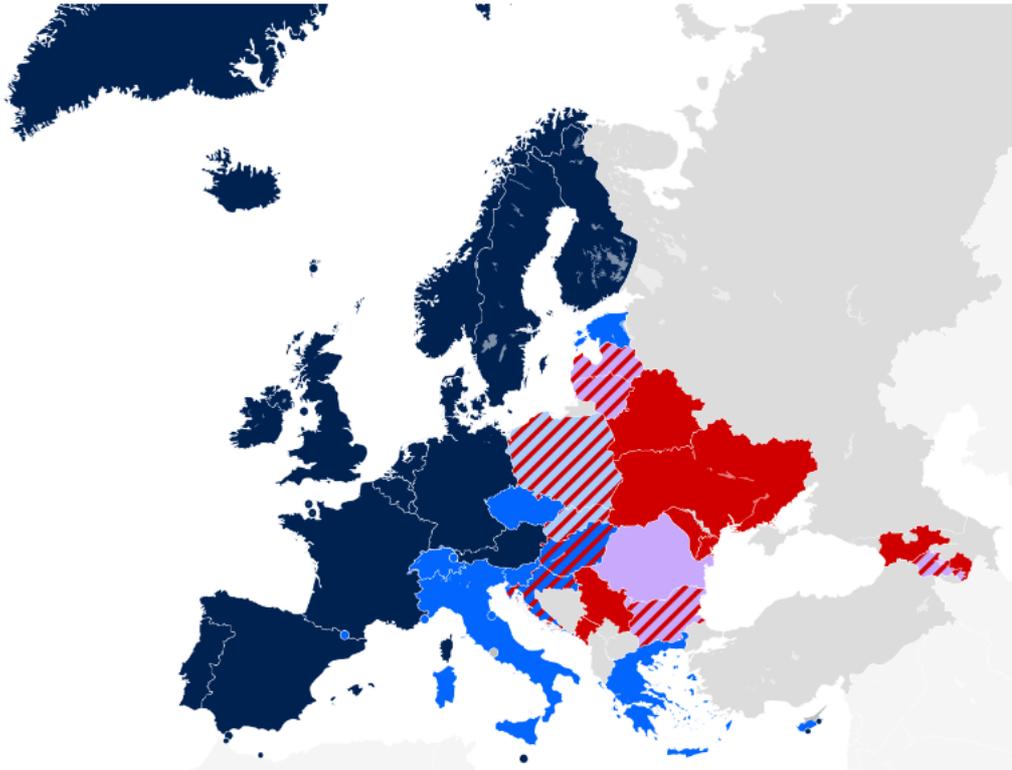
In 2009, prime minister Gordon Brown made an official apology for the way Turing was treated, and in 2013, Queen Elizabeth posthumously pardoned Alan Turing. In 2014, the movie *The Imitation Game*, based on Turing's life, was released.

11. Legislative action for equal rights for homosexuals in The Netherlands

As early as the mid-1980s, a group of gay rights activists, headed by Henk Krol – then editor-in-chief of the *Gay Krant* – asked the Dutch government to allow same-sex couples to marry. Parliament decided in 1995 to create a special commission, which was assigned to investigate the possibility of same-sex marriage. At that moment, Christian democrats were not part of the ruling coalition for the first time since the introduction of full democracy. The special commission finished its work in 1997 and concluded that civil marriage should be extended to include same-sex couples. After the election of 1998, the government promised to tackle the issue. In September 2000, the final legislation draft was debated in the Dutch Parliament.

The marriage bill passed the House of Representatives by 109 votes to 33 on 12 September 2000. Same-sex marriage in the Netherlands has been legal since 1 April 2001. The Netherlands was the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage.

12. Laws regarding same-sex partnerships in Europe



Laws regarding same-sex partnerships in Europe:

- Marriage
- Civil union
- Limited domestic recognition (cohabitation)
- Limited foreign recognition (residency rights)
- Unrecognised
- Constitution limits marriage to opposite-sex couples. May include recent laws or court decisions that have not yet entered into effect.

silje

I. bakke (2007) / Wikipedia

13. Femicide...

...is a sex-based hate crime term, broadly defined as “the intentional killing of females (women or girls) because they are females.”

In France and Spain more than 100 women are killed each year for being a woman. Mostly by an (ex-)partner, sometimes by other men or family members. Despite legislation against gender related violence, since 2004, 796 women were killed in Spain, and even more in France. Both countries know a strong macho-culture that too often prompts men to use violence against women.

On March 8, 2020, on International Women’s Day, huge marches of protesters against femicide were organized in several European cities. The French and Spanish governments are preparing laws to ban sex related violence. An important part of such legislation is about the principle of mutual consent: you can only have sex if both partners agree. With this new law, the Spanish government shows its ambition to set a new European standard in fighting femicide and sexual harassment.

Student Material: Women of the world, unite!

[Interactive Timeline](#)