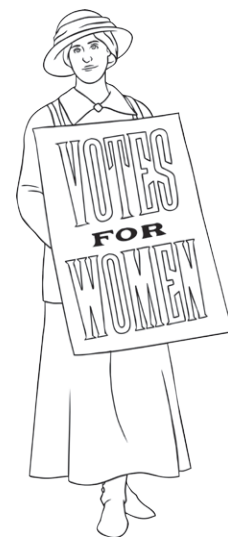


Gender Equality in the UK

At the start of the 20th century, men and women were far from equal. During that century, a large number of changes occurred which would improve the position of women. However, there is still disagreement about whether women have achieved equality in the UK.

In 1918, the Suffragettes won a major step in their battle to allow women the vote. In that year, women over 30 were given the right to vote. Over the next few years, the voting age for women would be reduced to 21 and then 18 and the first women MPs would enter the Houses of Parliament. This was seen by many as a major step on the road towards gender equality.



Despite this, it was not until the 1970s that legislation was introduced that prevented women being discriminated against in the workplace and forced companies to pay women and men the same amount for doing the same job.

However, many people do not believe that women and men are truly equal in the UK today. Feminists, who argue for gender equality, argue that women are still treated less favourably in men in many ways. One of the most powerful pieces of evidence they offer for this is the 'Gender Pay Gap'. This statistic, which is measured each year by the government, shows that, in 2016, men earned an average 18% more than women. This is despite the fact, feminists point out, that women are increasingly better qualified than men.

Pay, however, is not the only area of inequality. Men are more likely to hold positions of power than women and less likely to be victims of domestic violence. Women, feminists argue, also frequently face sexual harassment from men. To feminists, therefore, there is much to do to make the UK an equal society.

Not everyone accepts feminist arguments. Many writers argue that the UK is an equal society, or at least very close to being one. They argue, for example, that women's pay and career progression is down to women's choices and not sexism. Many women, they point out, take maternity leave and/or career breaks to raise children. This means men spend more of their lives at work and therefore progress further in their careers. Further, they argue that women are increasingly taking top jobs; the UK has had two female Prime Ministers.

