

Women in 20th Century Ireland

Headings	Notes
THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY: WOMEN AS SECON-CLASS CITIZENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 1900, women could not vote, their rights to property and education were limited and discrimination in the workplace was legal.
VOTING RIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suffrage was the campaign for voting rights for women and the women who campaigned were known as suffragettes.• In 1908, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington founded the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) to campaign for votes for women. Its tactics included parades, attacks on property and hunger strikes.
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The number of girls attending school had increased in the 1800s, thanks to the work of Catholic religious orders. However, it was not until 1908 that all Irish universities opened to women.• In the following years, women made up about 10% of university students. Only wealthy and middle-class women had that opportunity.
EMPLOYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the early twentieth century, women were expected to marry and have children. There was no need for most women to find jobs. Most middle-class women had servants who did the housework and minded their children.• Women who had jobs before they got married, such as national school teachers, had to give up those jobs when they married.• Poorer women often worked outside the home as domestic servants (maids, cooks, nannies), as street traders in larger cities, or in the Belfast mills. They were paid lower wages than men.• In rural areas, women worked on the farm and looked after animals as well as running the household.
Keywords	Summary
Suffrage	
Voting Rights	
Hanna Sheehy Skeffington	
Irish Women's Franchise League	
Domestic servants	
Street Traders	
Belfast Mills	

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WOMEN IN THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 1914, a women's organisation named Cumann na mBan was founded to support the Independence movement.• In 1916, before the Rising, Cumann na mBan became an auxiliary force to the Irish Volunteers.• Some women fought in the Easter Rising, including Countess Constance Markievicz, Dr Kathleen Lynn and Margaret Skinnider, while others acted as messengers. Military pensions were often denied to these women.• In 1918, Constance Markievicz became the first women elected to Westminster. She did not take her seat there but later served as Minister for Labour in the First Dáil.
INDEPENDENT IRELAND WOMEN AND POLITICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 1922, the Constitution of the Irish Free State gave the vote to all women and men over the age of 21.• This new Irish state was very conservative and Catholic.• Most people believed a women's place was in the home. The 1937 Constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann) recognised a woman's special role 'within the home'.• Divorce and contraception were banned.• Women could not sit on juries.
THE MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Magdalene Laundries were run to house "fallen women" (<i>women who became pregnant outside marriage or did not adhere to Irish society's social norms</i>) from 1765 to 1996.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11,000 women officially recorded to have entered these laundries since 1922.• These laundries were quietly supported by the state and were run Predominately by Catholic religious orders. The women were sent to these laundries where they were mentally, emotionally and physically abused by the nuns (and priests) as they were forced to complete unpaid labour until their child was born.• The women were sent here by their families to avoid public shame on the 'advice' of 'concerned' people in power such as priests, politicians, judges or gardaí.
Keywords	Summary
Cumann na mBan	
Countess Constance Markievicz	
Dr Kathleen Lynn	
Bunreacht na hÉireann	
Magdalene Laundries	
Fallen Women	
Catholic Religious Orders	

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THE MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women, and their babies, who had died were often buried in unmarked graves such as those in Tuam, Co. Galway or High Park, Drumcondra.• Very often the children were put up for adoption with their mothers' permission and wouldn't be told that they had been adopted.• The last Irish Magdalene laundry closed its doors in 1996.
EMPLOYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most women continued to work as domestic servants or in low-paid jobs.• The Conditions of Employment Act 1935 limited the number of women in any industry.• In 1932, the 'marriage bar' was introduced: women automatically lost their jobs in the public service (e.g. teachers) when they got married.• In 1946, only 2.5% of married women in Ireland were employed, as opposed to 25% in Britain.• Women emigrated at much higher rates than men in the 1940s and 1950s.
MOVES TOWARDS EQUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As the economy expanded in the 1960s, more workers were needed. Many of these jobs went to women, who by 1970 made up 25% of the workforce.
THE 1960s: GRADUAL CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women benefitted from free education and increased access to universities.• Shows like the Late Late Show debated controversial topics such as marriage breakdown and contraception. This helped to change attitudes over time.
THE IRISH FEMINIST MOVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The feminist movement was part of the wider worldwide struggle for rights of the 1960s. Feminism is the movement aimed at achieving gender equality, based on political, social and economic equality between men and women.• In 1971, the Irish Women's Liberation Movement was founded by Nell McCafferty, Mary Kenny and Nuala O'Faolain.• They pressured politicians and held protest marches. They took the train to Belfast and brought back contraceptives to protest against the law banning them in the Republic.
Keywords	Summary
Tuam, Co. Galway	
High Park, Drumcondra	
Conditions of Employment Act	
Marriage Bar	
Free Education	
The Late Late Show	
Feminism	
Irish Women's Liberation Movement	
Contraceptives	

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CHANGES FROM THE 1970s TO THE 1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1972, the Commission on the Status of Women recommended the removal of most of the legal barriers to equality. In 1973, the 'marriage bar' was abolished. The Anti-Discrimination Act of 1974 banned paying men more than women, for the same work. The Employment Equality Act of 1977 outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex or marital status. In 1979, Marie Geoghegan-Quinn became the first female government minister since the First Dáil. In 1993, the ban on contraception was fully lifted. In 1996, divorce was introduced following a referendum.
THE POSITION OF WOMEN AT THE END OF THE CENTURY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In politics and law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary Robinson was elected President in 1990, followed by Mary McAleese in 1997. In 1993, Mary Harney became the first woman to lead a political party (the Progressive Democrats) and in 1997 she became the first female Tánaiste. In 2011, Susan Denham became Ireland's first female Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In the areas of education and employment, by 2,000: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women made up over 40% of the workforce, but more likely than men to have low-paid jobs. Relatively few women held high-paying executive positions. Women made up 55% of university students. More women were pursuing professional careers than in the previous generation. In sport and the media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athlete Sonia O'Sullivan and boxer Katie Taylor won medals in the World Championships and the Olympics. Award-winning broadcasters Olivia O'Leary and Marion Finucane covered current affairs, politics, social issues and more.
Keywords	Summary
Commission on the Status of Women	
Marriage Bar	
Anti-Discrimination Act (1974)	
Employment Equality Act	
Marie Geoghegan-Quinn	
Contraception	Divorce
Mary Robinson	Katie Taylor
Mary McAleese	Sonia O'Sullivan
Mary Harney	

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Keywords	Definitions
1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State	Gave the vote to all women and men over the age of 21
Abstentionism	Policy by Sinn Féin MPs to not take their seats in the House of Commons.
Anti-Discrimination Act 1974	Women and men must be paid the same wage for the same work
Bunreacht na hÉireann	Constitution of Ireland, 1937
Conditions of Employment Act	Limited the number of women in any industry
Countess Constance Markievicz	an Irish politician, revolutionary, nationalist, suffragist, socialist, the first woman elected to the Westminster Parliament, and was elected Minister for Labour in the First Dáil, becoming the first female cabinet minister in Europe.
Cumann na mBan	an Irish republican women's paramilitary organisation
Discrimination	Unjust treatment of different people, usually based on race, religion, sexual orientation or gender.
Dr Kathleen Lynn	the use of fear and acts of violence to try to change society or government policy for a political or ideological purpose
Employment Equality Act 1977	Women have equal rights to be employed regardless of marriage status
Feminism	The belief that men and women are equal and should have the same rights and opportunities.
Franchise	The vote or suffrage
Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington	a suffragette and Irish nationalist
Katie Taylor	an Irish professional boxer and former footballer.
Marriage Bar	Women had to give up their jobs in the civil service when getting married.
Mary McAleese	The second female President of Ireland
Mary Robinson	The first female President of Ireland
Relief Aid	Charity for people who are poor and have no income.
Sonia O'Sullivan	an Irish former track and field athlete.
Suffragettes	Women who were willing to take militant action in order to achieve voting rights.
Women's Suffrage	The right of women to vote in political elections.