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CHRONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

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1900 AD

1908
Irish Women's Franchise League founded by Hanna and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington

1910 AD

1912–23
Women involved in the independence movement



1917
Women over 30 allowed vote

1922

The Irish Free State established

1927

Women not eligible for jury service unless they apply

1935

Contraceptives banned

1951

Mother and Child Controversy

1973

Ireland joined EEC (European Economic Community) (later EU)

Women in the public service no longer lose their jobs when they marry

Social welfare allowances for single mothers

1977

Employment Equality Act: unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sex or marital status

1996

Divorce referendum passed

1930 AD

1932
Women civil servants and teachers lose their jobs when they marry

1940 AD

1937
Irish Constitution passed

1950 AD

1958
Ban on married primary teachers lifted

1960 AD

1970
Commission on the Status of Women set up
Women's Liberation Movement founded in Ireland

1970 AD

1974
Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act

1980 AD

1975
Men and women equally eligible for jury service

1976
EEC compelled Irish government to implement equal pay for women

1990 AD

1979
Contraception allowed for married couples over 18

1990
Mary Robinson elected first woman President of Ireland

1999 AD

1999
Mary McAleese elected President of Ireland

2000 AD

2000
Equal Status Act prohibits discrimination

L.O. 2.9

The Nature of History: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11

CBA1

CBA2



You will learn to ...

- ⦿ Explain how the experience of women in Irish society changed during the 20th century
- ⦿ Explore the Nature of History

KEY WORDS

- Franchise
- Suffragette

- Discrimination
- Equal pay



Women in Early Twentieth-Century Ireland

Early decades

Women as second-class citizens

In the early years of the 20th century, women in Ireland were **second-class citizens**.

- They could not vote in general elections
- Their education was limited
- They were expected to marry and have children
- In married life, they were largely dependent on their **husbands**, who were the breadwinners.

Women at work

Married women

The better-off married women did not go out to work. They supervised their servants, who did the housework and minded the children. Poorer women often had to work outside the home to support their families. They worked as **house cleaners** and **street traders** in Dublin and other cities and towns. In Belfast, women often worked in the mills or factories, but for lower wages than the men.

Women in rural areas

In rural areas, women often did **outdoor work** on the farm, as well as **housework**. They sometimes helped by milking cows, feeding poultry and selling eggs in the local market.

Single women

Single women in the country and city often became **domestic servants**. By 1911, one working woman in three was a servant. Many young women (and men) **emigrated**, especially to America, attracted by better wages and city life.

No changes for women

After Ireland got its independence in 1922, the situation for women in the South of Ireland remained **much the same** for the next 40 years, until the 1960s. Most women continued to work as domestic servants or in agriculture, with only a small number employed in industry. But wherever women worked, they had mostly **unskilled and low-paid jobs** and got less pay than men. In 1926, for example, the average pay for women was only 70 per cent of men's pay. As a result, **trade unions** often sought to protect male employment from cheaper female competition. Not surprisingly, many young women continued to **emigrate** up to the 1960s. The proportion of women emigrating between 1926 and 1936 was far higher than for men – 1,298 women emigrated for every 1,000 men.

More women at work – what changes occurred in the 1960s?

Changes occurred in women at work in the 1960s so that by the end of the 20th century more women went to work **outside the home**, and married women held onto the jobs they had before marriage. Women took up the new jobs in offices, teaching, nursing

Explain the changing experience of women at work and in education in 20th century Ireland



and the civil service. To cope with the demands of home and careers, husbands and wives used birth control to limit the size of their families.

However, many women still only worked part-time. As well as this, the proportion of senior women executives in industry, banking and the civil service was still much smaller than the proportion of women in the workforce.



Analysing Sources

Women at work

Q Source 1

Women in the labour force, 1971–97

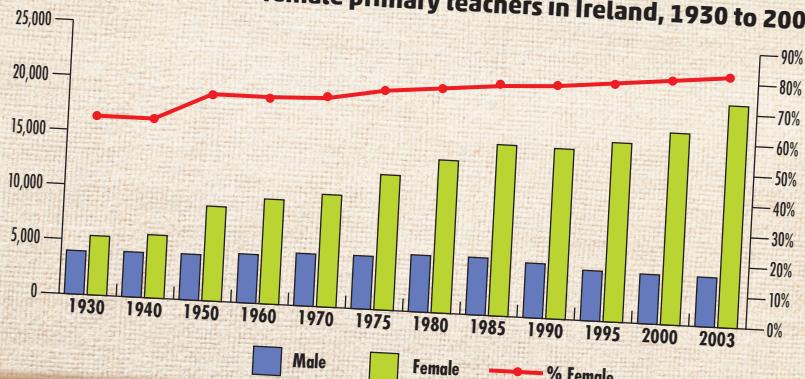
	1971	1981	1991	1997
Female labour force as % of total labour force	25.7	29.1	32.7	37.0
Married women in the labour force as % of total women in the labour force	13.6	30.3	40.8	52.7

(Employment Equality Agency, Women in the labour force, Dublin, 1999)

Q Source 2

Source 2

Numbers of male and female primary teachers in Ireland, 1930 to 2003



- In Source 1, what **changes** have occurred for women in the workforce between 1971 and 1997?
- Explain **one reason** for those changes.
- What **changes** have occurred in the numbers and percentages of primary teachers between 1930 and 2003, according to Source 2?
- Explain **one reason** for the changes.
- In Source 3, how does Ireland **compare** with the rest of the EU?
- What **conclusions** can you draw from these sources about the gap between male and female workers in Ireland?
- If there is equal pay for men and women for the same work, why is there a gender pay gap?

Q Source 3

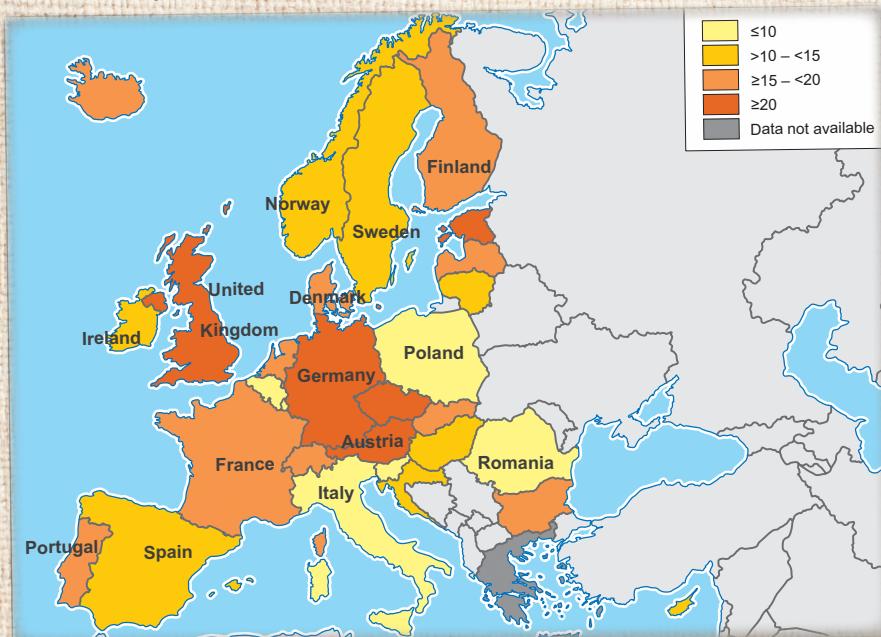
Female managers in Ireland earn 16% less than male counterparts – study

Women in management positions in Ireland earn 16% less than men, according to new research by Europe's statistical agency Eurostat. The study also found that the average pay gap across the EU is 23%.

In Ireland, two out of every five managers are women, according to Eurostat. That places Ireland's performance in terms of gender equality in management ranks ahead of France, Sweden and the UK. However, male managers are paid 16% more than females in management roles in Ireland.

(RTÉ, Wednesday, 8 Mar 2017,

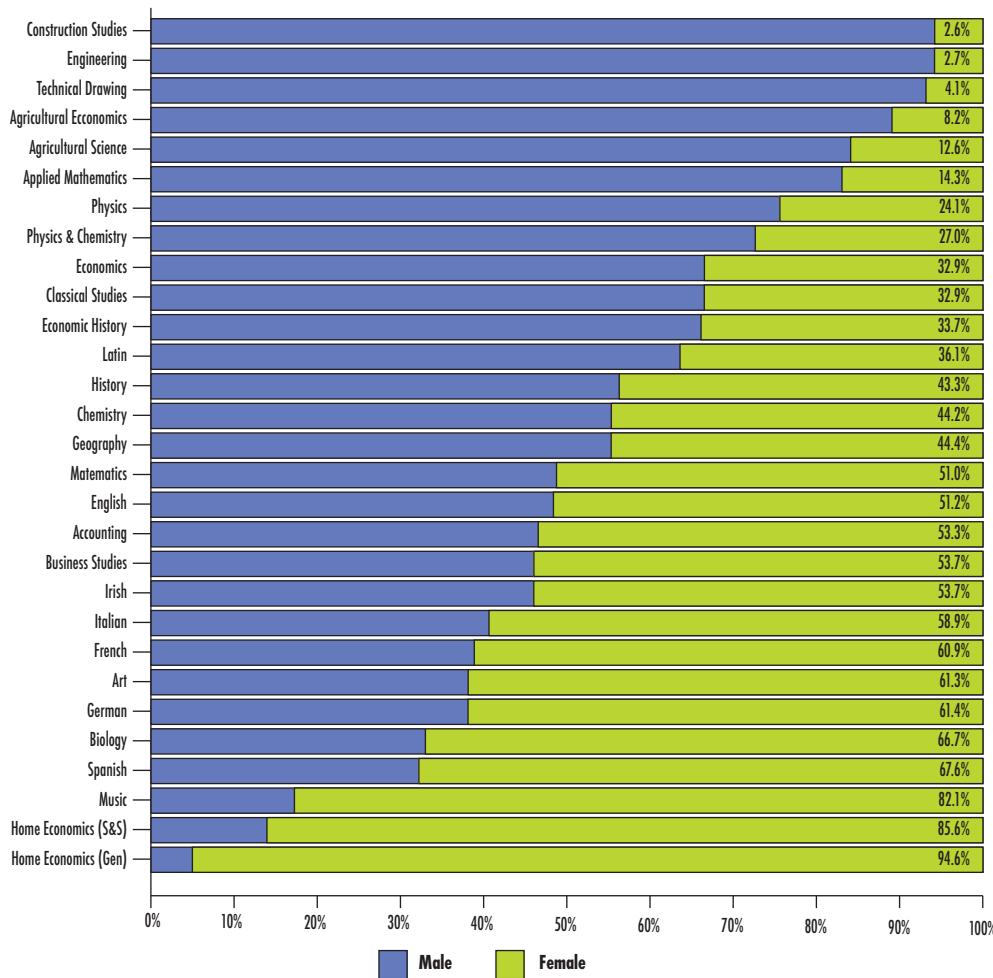
www.rte.ie/news/business/2017/0308/857998-eurostat-statistical-agency/)



Women in education

In the early 20th century, women's role in education was limited, but some changes were occurring. More girls were continuing in school, especially in convent secondary schools, but the number of women in colleges and universities was small – about 300, compared with more than 3,000 men. This did not change until the 1960s. After this, by the end of the 20th century, the number of women was matching the number of men at third level colleges.

Education opened up new careers to women so that professions which were once the monopoly of men, such as medicine and engineering, have now changed.



The breakdown in the numbers taking different subjects in the Leaving Cert. between male and female students in 1993. Does this graph show that there are some subjects which are 'male' subjects and some subjects which are 'female' subjects? Investigate how this graph compares with the current figures.

Women and Politics

Votes for women

At the beginning of the 20th century, women could neither vote in elections nor be elected to parliament.

Some people campaigned to get votes (franchise or suffrage) for women. One of these was **Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington**, who founded the **Irish Women's Franchise League** in 1908. It was very active in the suffragette campaign. The main political leaders at the time, **Redmond** for Home Rule and **Carson** for the unionists, opposed

Explain the changing experiences of women in other aspects of life in early 20th century Ireland





Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, a leading suffragette campaigner



Elizabeth O'Farrell, a nurse, accompanied Pearse as he surrendered to General Lowe. Later, she took the surrender message to other rebel garrisons. O'Farrell's feet are just visible beyond Pearse.

votes for women, though the Ulster unionists committed themselves to giving votes to women if they set up a Provisional Government.

Women during World War I

In Ireland during World War I, women encouraged men to enlist and cheered on the enlisting soldiers. When Irishmen went off to fight in the war, more women got jobs in factories, offices, banks, schools and hospitals. As Ireland was part of the United Kingdom, Irishwomen over the age of 30 got the vote in 1918 because of the role women played in World War I.

Women in the independence movement

Irishwomen were also involved in the independence movement. **Cumann na mBan** was founded in 1914 'to assist in arming and equipping a body of Irishmen for the defence of Ireland'. Its most famous member was **Countess Markievicz**, who was also active in the Irish Citizen Army and Sinn Féin. She was second-in-command of a Volunteer group in the College of Surgeons during the 1916 Rising.

She was sentenced to death after the Rising but she was not executed because she was a woman. She also became the first woman to be elected to parliament in Westminster in 1918. However, as a Sinn Féin TD, she refused to take her seat (abstained).

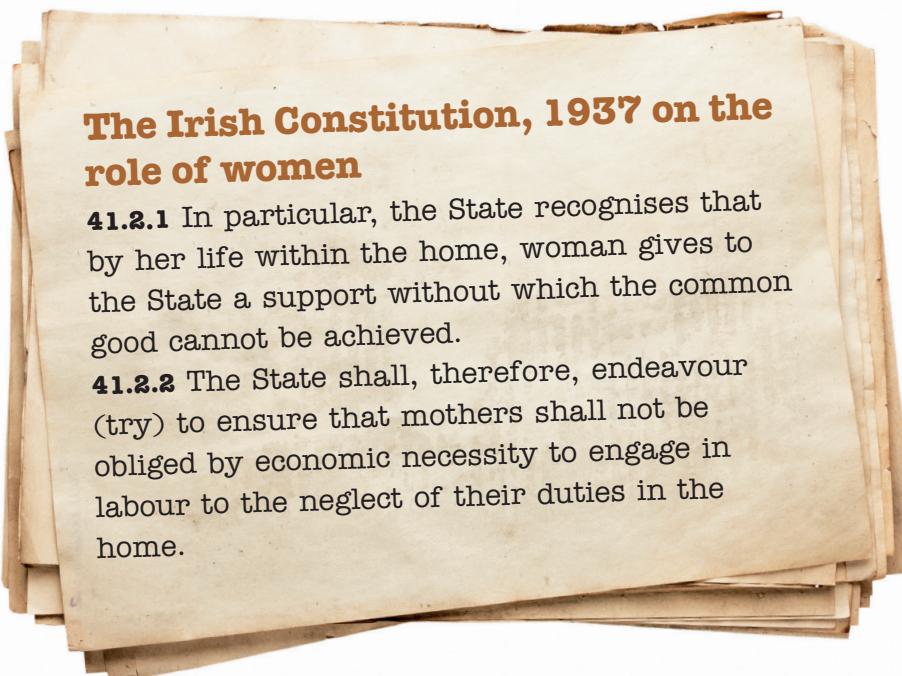


Countess Markievicz, who took part in the 1916 Rising

A conservative society

In the new Irish Free State, women over the age of 21 got the vote in 1922. However, Ireland was a **conservative** (old-fashioned, traditional) society from the 1920s to the 1960s.

- Most men and women thought that a ‘woman’s place was in the home’, taking care of the family. This reflected thinking in most Western countries at that time.
- **Divorce** and **contraception** were banned, and women were not allowed sit on juries.
- A ‘**marriage bar**’ was brought in in 1932, which meant women had to give up certain jobs when they got married, for example, teaching and the civil service.
- The **Irish Constitution of 1937** supported the traditional attitude to women by recognising women’s special role ‘within the home’.



In your own words, what do these articles say?

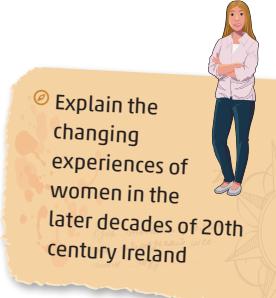
◀ p. 207

The 1960s Onwards – How did Women’s Lives Change?

The position of women changed gradually in the 1960s.

- Girls had greater access to education
- Outside ideas influenced life in Ireland, particularly from **America** (see Ch. 24)
- The growing economy provided job opportunities
- Ireland joined the UN in 1955 and the EEC in 1973. The EEC often forced Ireland to bring in laws to eliminate inequality.

The **women’s movement** demanded changes and greater equality for women. The government set up the **Commission for the Status of Women** in 1970, which issued a report in 1972 encouraging the government and other organisations to eliminate all aspects of inequality. The report led to the **marriage bar** being lifted and to the passage of laws that required equal pay for equal work. Later, the **Employment Equality Act 1977** outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex or marital status.



At the same time, the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM) was founded in Dublin in 1970. It drew its inspiration from the women's movement in America in the 1960s, and from authors such as Betty Friedan, who wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, demanding more from life than 'marriage, motherhood and homemaking'.

The IWLM published *Chains or Change* in 1971, a critical analysis of the position of women in Irish society at that time. The Movement got wide publicity through appearances on the *Late Late Show*, and actions such as the Contraceptive Train to Belfast to buy contraceptives, which were illegal in the South.



Analysing Sources

The Irish Women's Liberation Movement

HISTORICAL JUDGEMENT

Q Source 1

A publication of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (1971)



Q Source 2



Members of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement on the platform of Connolly Station, Dublin 1971 prior to boarding the Belfast Train to buy contraceptives. Photograph: *The Irish Times*

Q Source 3

Article 40 of the Irish Constitution promises equal rights to all citizens of the Republic of Ireland. 1,434,970 Irish citizens (at the last count) are not given such rights. These are the women of Ireland. A married woman in Ireland is regarded as the chattel (property) of her husband. ... She must have permission from him for all kinds of things ...

He can change their **name** without consulting her. **She** may not.

.... The Constitution of this country promises a special place to **women in the home**. But the law has not fulfilled that promise.

Irishwomen in the home have noticeably inferior status.

And then, of course, if the woman wishes, or needs, to go out to **work**, she goes into unequal pay, the marriage bar, no amenities and penalising taxation.

(Irish Women's Liberation Movement, *Chains or Change* [1971])



Q Source 4

Equal Rights for Irish Women!

Do you think it's just that ... for every 26p (5s 3d) that a woman earns, her male counterpart gets 47p (9s 6d)?

Do you think it's just that ... The Civil Service and all State Bodies, including Radio Telefís Éireann, sack women upon marriage?

Do you know that ... a mother is not permitted to sign a children's allowance receipt without her husband's permission?

**(Irish Women's Liberation Movement,
Chains or Change [1971])**

1. What is the **message** of the cover of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement publication in Source 1?
2. To whom is the cover **appealing**?
3. How **effective** is the cover?
4. What is the **message** of the picture in Source 2?
5. Why do you think the women brought the press to the station before they left for Belfast?
6. According to Source 3, what **promise** made by Article 40 of the Irish Constitution has not been kept?
7. 'Irishwomen in the home have inferior status.' Give **one piece of evidence** from the source to support this view.
8. Give **two problems**, mentioned in this document, for women who wish or need to go out to work.
9. Select **one** of the statements in Source 4 and give your opinion on it.
10. How **effective** is the information in this source in persuading you that there should be equal rights for women?
11. From your study of women's experiences in 20th century Ireland, mention **two ways** in which women's lives have **changed** compared to the information in Sources 3 and 4? Explain your answers using the evidence from the sources.

Women in politics – the South

More women became involved in politics. Women became government ministers, for example **Máire Geoghegan-Quinn**, who became Minister for Justice, and **Gemma Hussey**, who was Minister for Education. **Mary Harney** became the first woman leader of a modern Irish political party in the South of Ireland when she became leader of the Progressive Democrats in 1993. She also became first woman Tánaiste.

The election of **Mary Robinson** as President of Ireland in 1990 had the greatest impact. Her success contributed to the election of another woman to succeed her as president, **Mary McAleese**. The contribution of these women, and that of successful sportswomen such as Sonia O'Sullivan, Catriona McKiernan (athletics) and Angela Downey (camogie) boosted the role of women in Irish society. Katie Taylor (boxing), Derval O'Rourke (athletics), Bríge Corkery and Rena Buckley (camogie and football) continued that role in the 21st century.

Women in politics – the North

Women took an active role in Northern politics in the 1960s as civil rights issues came to the fore. **Angela McCrystal** was involved in the Homeless Citizens League in Dungannon to highlight discrimination in housing against Catholics. **Patricia McCluskey** and **Brid Rodgers** were involved in the Campaign for Social Justice, which provided the information to support the accusations in relation to discrimination in housing and gerrymandering (vote rigging) in local councils.

Both were also involved in the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in 1967, as was **Bernadette Devlin**. Devlin was later one of the leaders of the People's Democracy march from Belfast to Derry in 1969, which was attacked by loyalist groups on the way.

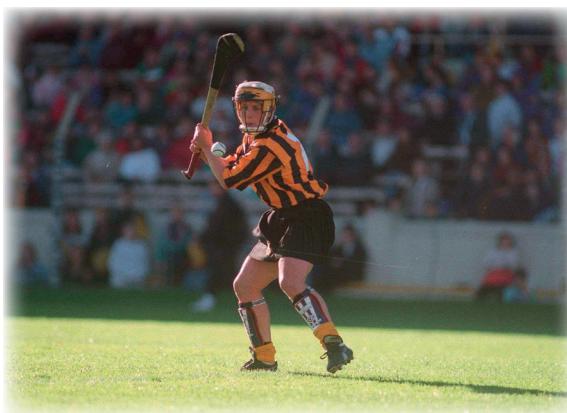
'Thus the founding of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) is as much the result of their [women's] groundwork as of the various trade union, republican and civil liberties groups that joined in establishing the organisation in April 1967.'
 (Catherine Shannon)

Women featured in later events as the Troubles developed. Some, such as the **Price sisters**, were imprisoned for bombing activities; others such as **Mairéad Corrigan** and **Betty Williams** founded the **Peace People**.

However, the North, similar to the South, faced the same difficulty of increasing the numbers of women going forward for and winning elections for local and regional government. Nevertheless, **Anne Dickson** became the first leader of a major political party in Ireland when she became the leader of the **Unionist Party of Northern Ireland (UPNI)** in 1976, which had split from the main Unionist Party.



Sonia O'Sullivan, athlete



Angela Downey, camogie player



Patricia McCluskey, civil rights activist



Katie Taylor, boxer



Bernadette Devlin, civil rights activist



Gemma Hussey, Minister for Education



Mary Harney, former Tánaiste



Mary Robinson, former President



Mary McAleese, former President



Analysing Sources

NUMERACY

Women in Politics

Q Source 1

Women in Irish general elections by decade

Candidates			Elected			
Year	Total number	Women candidates	Women as %	Total number	Women candidates	Women as %
1923	377	7	1.9	153	5	3.3
1933	246	6	2.4	153	3	1.9
1943	354	9	2.5	138	3	2.2
1954	303	6	1.9	147	5	3.4
1969	373	11	2.9	144	3	2.1
1977	375	25	6.6	148	6	4.1
1982*	365	31	8.5	166	14	8.4
1989	371	53	13.8	166	13	7.8
Total	2764	148	5.3	1215	52	4.2

Note: 1982* refers to the second general election in that year.

(Frances Gardiner, 'Political interest and participation of Irish women 1922–92' in Ailbhe Smyth (ed.), *Irish women's studies reader*, Dublin, 1993)



- When did a **significant increase** occur in the number and percentage of women seeking election in Irish general elections, according to Source 1?
- How significant an increase was it?
- What explanations can you give for the figures in this source?
- How does Ireland **compare** with other EU states in relation to the proportion of women in national parliaments in Source 2?

Q Source 2

Proportion of women in the national parliaments of the European Union member states

State	Year	% Female
Belgium	1995	15.3
Denmark	1994	33.0
Germany	1994	25.7
Greece	1993	5.3
Spain	1993	14.6
France	1993/92	5.6
Ireland	1997/92	12.4
Italy	1994	12.0
Luxembourg	1994	16.6
Netherlands	1994/95	30.2
Austria	1994	22.7
Portugal	1991	8.7
Finland	1995	33.5
Sweden	1994	40.4
UK	1992	7.4
Average		14.8

('Women and decision making' quoted in Department of Education, 'Facts and figures' in *Balance: A module in social education and equality issues*, Dublin, 1997)

Problems

In spite of all these changes in the experience of women, some problems still existed at the end of the 20th century:

- Women were still **exploited** in advertising
- Some **traditionally male clubs** and institutions were slow to accept women members on equal terms
- The pressures of modern society led to the **break-up of marriages** affecting both men and women
- There was still a **gap in pay** between males and females
- There was still a gap in the numbers of males and females in **management positions**.

INVESTIGATING A REPOSITORY OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE EXPERIENCES OF IRISH WOMEN IN THE 20TH CENTURY

RTÉ Archives, Milestones for Women,
www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1666-women-and-society/
National Museum of Ireland – Country Life, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
www.museum.ie/Country-Life

➤ Preparing for CBA1

A project related to an aspect of the history of your locality or place
(or personal/family history)

LOCAL PROJECTS FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF IRISH WOMEN IN THE 20TH CENTURY

- Any women in your locality active in the suffrage campaign or the independence struggle in the early 20th century
- The Irish Countrywomen's Association in your locality
- The Irish Housewives Association in your locality
- The Irish Women's Liberation Movement in your locality

Your locality can include your county

➤ Preparing for CBA2

A project on the life and experience of a person of historical interest

PERSONS OF INTEREST IN THE EXPERIENCES OF IRISH WOMEN IN THE 20TH CENTURY

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| ● Louie Bennett | ● Elizabeth Bowen | ● Kathleen Clarke |
| ● Margaret Burke Sheridan | ● Bernadette Devlin | ● Muriel Gahan |
| ● Grace Gifford Plunkett | ● Maud Gonne McBride | ● Nora Herlihy |
| ● Mainie Jellett | ● Mary Lavin | ● Mary McAleese |
| ● Mary MacSwiney | ● Constance Markievicz | ● Patricia McCluskey |
| ● Mary Robinson | ● Peig Sayers | ● Hanna Sheehy Skeffington |
| ● Elizabeth O'Farrell | ● Jennie Wyse Power | ● Sonya O'Sullivan |

HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

Focus Task



- Investigate the RTÉ Archives video clips on Women's Lib and the Contraceptive Train, 1971, and related issues, in www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1666-women-and-society/370226-contraceptive-train/
- How are the issues on women's liberation presented in the RTÉ video clips?

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Web Resources and Reading