

# Equal rights for women essay sample

[Parts of the World](#), [European Union](#)



## **ABSTRACT**

Increasing the educational levels and economic status of women is the most important way to advance the cause of equal rights. In most Western countries, where women now have far more these opportunities that ever before in history, they no longer have to depend on their husbands for survival. This means that more of them can now avoid marriage and childrearing completely if they choose, compared to most women 100 or 200 years ago, who just fell into automatically into these roles.

Women's wages, incomes and educational opportunities are lower than men's in almost every country of the world today, and even economists often overlook their contributions to household living standards (Elson, 1995, p. 7). In childhood, they have poorer healthcare and nutrition because men place more value on sons than daughters. Until fairly recent times, the (mostly male) makers of political and economic policy treated women as if they were "largely invisible" (Elson, p. 11).

Guaranteeing equal rights to women can only be done by improving their incomes, employment and educational opportunities. Poverty and low economic and educational status lead to higher levels of rape and domestic abuse that often go ignored at every level of the criminal justice system, and "socially structured gender inequality is a primary reason for the high levels of violence against women in our society" (Sokoloff and DuPont, 2005, p. 2).

Women without educational and economic resources also have fewer chances to escape abusive or oppressive relationships and family situations. For most of human history, society confined women to the domestic sphere under the control of their fathers and husbands, who by law were quite

literally their masters. Even in the U. S. and other Western nations, this only began to change in the 19th and 20th Centuries, although women had to struggle to obtain even basic citizenship and voting rights. As an institution, the family was not really all that different from domestic slavery, in which divorce was not permitted and any type of sexual relationships outside of marriage were illegal. Until fairly recent times, marriages were arranged rather than a matter of free choice, and women's dowries represented " the biggest infusion of cash, goods, or land that a man would ever receive" (Coontz, 2005, p. 5).

Husbands had the power to use these resources as they saw fit since women were not allowed to own property independently of men, while women's duties consisted of cooking, cleaning and rearing children. For most of history social and family relationships were highly authoritarian, and marriage was " far too vital an economic and political institution to be left entirely to the free choice of the individuals involved" (Coontz, p. 4). Basing marriages and family tie on romantic love and individual choice is a distinctly modern idea, like the equality of women.

In many Western nations today, where women have greater educational and economic opportunities, singleness is about to become the new norm, possibly " punctuated by periods of cohabitation" (Maushart, 2006, p. 38). In the U. S. and other countries the traditional family in which the husband is employed and the wife remains at home tending to (unpaid) domestic tasks is already in the minority. Since the 1960s, the number of unmarried couples living together has also increased significantly, as have the numbers of women who will never have any children. In the Western countries, where

the economy is now based on information and services rather than manufacturing, agriculture and blue-collar labor, women may even have an advantage over men in the job market. With the development of urban, technological, mass consumer economies in the West, though, the equality of women become conceivable for the first time.

## **REFERENCES**

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