

Women's rights in the united states from the 1900s to the present

[Sociology](#), [Feminism](#)



Women's Rights in America 1900s to Present

The amount of rights women have achieved since the 1900s is astounding. It took hard work and dedication of these women. The 1900s began a new wave of women's rights, while the end of 2010s was about keeping those rights. Women finally worked together to get to where they needed to be.

The 1900s began the slow drumming of the women's rights movement that the U. S. knows today. Women began to fight for the right to vote. Between 1880 and 1910, the number of women employed in the United States increased from 2.6 million to 7.8 million (loc. gov). Women who finally had jobs for the first time in their lives were anxious to see what other freedoms they could enjoy. They thought it was only logical that they got to vote since they were working class citizens. Since they were working, women also became concerned with their working conditions. A lot of women were seamstresses and their place of work would be full of flammable items. This concern was warranted, though, because in 1911 the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory incident occurred. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was a sewing company that erupted in flames. There were no fire escapes so many women, who were all working on higher floors, either had to jump to their deaths or be engulfed in the flames. It was one of the deadliest industrial accidents in recorded American history.

The 1910s were more exciting than the 1900s for women's rights. The 1910s is the time where the suffragettes were on the rise. The right for women to vote was the hot topic in many households across America. Starting in 1910,

some states in the West began to extend the vote to women for the first time in almost 20 years (History). Many women had different ideas on how to achieve suffrage. In 1916, NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt unveiled what she called a “ Winning Plan” to get the vote at last: a blitz campaign that mobilized state and local suffrage organizations all over the country, with special focus on those recalcitrant regions (History). Some women thought that they best way to get people’s attention is to do something so dramatic that people have to notice the cause. It does not matter how it got accomplished, but white women received the right to vote in 1920. It was added to the constitution as the 19th amendment.

The 1920s was a time for cultural changes for women. Flappers were beginning to appear in large number all over the country. Many women idealized the lifestyle of a flapper because it seemed to be care-free and exciting. As a flapper, women were more likely to behave like men by smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. These women were tired of the cultural norms that surrounded their everyday life. Many people argued that women should not have received the right to vote because it is making them floozies. This statement is simply untrue and the two things have no correlation.

Civil rights for women of color were on the rise in 1930s. African American women were discriminated against more harshly during these years. Mary McLeod Bethune was an African American woman. A leader in the American black community, she founded the National Council of Negro Women (1935) and was director (1936–44) of Negro Affairs of the National Youth

Administration. (infoplease). When women work together to achieve equality, even the most unconventional ideas can be understood. If it were not for the work of these women in the 1930s, African American women may not have the level of equality the experience today.

The 1940s began World War II. The topic of women serving in the army was something everyone was talking about. Women have always been important to the war effort by contributing their extra clothes for materials and working in factory jobs when the men were away. Women wanted to help out more and put their lives on the line for their country. Although the U. S. Congress in 1943 had given the Women's Army Corps (WAC) full army status during wartime, the WAC law was scheduled to expire on June 30, 1948 (britannica). Women were wary of the expiration date of WAC and began to search for a way to serve full time. President Harry S. Truman on June 12, 1948, as the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, it enabled women to serve as permanent, regular members of not only the army but also the navy, marine corps, and the recently formed air force (britannica). Women could finally serve their country in a new way.

The 1950s created what is now known as the typical housewife trope. Women were eager to start families after the war was over. Television was on the rise and every t. v. show portrayed how a perfect housewife should act. It was not oppressing for most women in the slightest, though, during this time. Most women were honestly content with their lives during this period though.

The 1960s and the 1970s were trying to achieve the same things. It was all about taking control of their bodies and reproductive systems. Birth control had just become legal for the first time thanks to the Food and Drug administration (ushistory). It was intended for housewives who were finished having kids, but it was quickly adopted by young single women. Reports of premarital sex increased dramatically as the “sexual revolution” spread across America. Young couples began cohabiting, living together before marriage, in greater and greater numbers. Critics denounced the tremendous change in lifestyle (ushistory). Contraceptives like the pill are not always 100% guaranteed which led to some women getting pregnant anyways. Abortion became a hot topic. In 1973, the Supreme Court heard the case of the anonymous Jane Roe, an unmarried Texas mother who claimed the state violated her constitutional rights by banning the practice. By a 7-2 vote, the court agreed. Since Roe v. Wade, the battle lines have been drawn between pro-choice supporters of abortion rights and pro-life opponents who seek to chisel away at the Roe decision (ushistory). Whether someone agrees with the politics of the 60s and 70s does not matter, it still was a historic two decades for women’s rights.

The 1980s was a time for women to get more rights in the workplace. Before the 80s, there were not many laws restricting sexual harassment at work. The case of Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson really changed how sexual assault cases were handled. Vinson was a good employee who kept getting promotions based on her work ethic. Sadly, she was being sexually harassed for most of her employment. She loved her job and did not want to lose it so

she kept quiet, but eventually she got fired. She brought the sexual harassment allegations to court. The court thus decided that a sexual harassment claim involving a hostile work environment is actionable under Title VII. In developing general guidelines for determining if behaviour constitutes sexual harassment, the Supreme Court noted that, most significantly, the plaintiff must have been subjected to unwelcome sexual advances (Meritor). Basically, women could now feel safer with coming forward about sexual assault in the workplace.

The 1990s to present has not seen much change in terms of women's rights. Domestic violence and equal pay was especially focused on during this time. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is the cornerstone of our nation's response to domestic and sexual violence. A strong bipartisan bill to reauthorize VAWA (S. 47) passed in the Senate on February 12, 2013 (78-22) and in the House of Representatives on February 28, 2013 (286-138). President Obama signed the bill into law on March 7, 2013 (nnedv). This is a government program that helps the victims of domestic violence. Women were still fighting to have equal pay, believe or not. The Equal Pay Act (EPA) prohibits sex-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same establishment who perform jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort, and responsibility under similar working conditions (eoc). With the EPA, women could feel more confident that they were being paid the same as men for doing the same work.

Women have fought for many decades trying to achieve rights that should have been theirs since the beginning. If it were not for courageous women

and their hard work, women could not experience the rights we enjoy today. Remember these accomplishments and never take basic human rights for granted.