

Women's Suffrage

Key people

Suffrage movement

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)
Author, philosopher and advocate of female rights. She published *"A vindication of the rights of women"* which is considered one of the earliest feminist works.

Millicent Fawcett (1847-1929)
Political activist for female suffrage. She established the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society (NUWSS) also known as Suffragist Movement.

Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928)
Activist for female suffrage who became disheartened with slow progress of NUWSS and established the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) known as the Suffragette Movement.

Nancy Astor (1879-1964)
American-born politician; the first female elected MP to take their seat in Parliament.

Other key figure

David Lloyd George (1836-1945)
British Home Secretary, later Prime Minister during the First World War. Met regularly with female suffrage campaigners, repeatedly promising suffrage.

Key terms

Domestic Sphere

19th century women were expected to stay at home, caring for the family.

Suffrage

The right to vote; originates from Latin *'suffragarium'* which is a voting tablet.

National Union for Women's Suffrage

NUWSS or Suffragist movement. Led by Millicent Fawcett who believed suffrage could be achieved by peaceful protest.

Petitioning

Writing to MPs request something

Women's Social and Political Union

WSPU or Suffragette movement. Exasperated by lack of movement, the Suffragette movement turned to violence, with a slogan of "Deeds not words".

"Deeds not words"

Slogan of the Suffragette movement, used to incite violence.

Civil disobedience

Acts of protest ranging from chaining to railings to violence such as destruction of property and arson.

Cat and Mouse Act (1913)

Law releasing imprisoned Suffragette's who were hunger striking.

Home Secretary

Political position in UK government responsible for elections/electorate.

Martyr

Someone who is killed for their beliefs.

Key events

Women in 19th century

- Women in 19th century Britain were very much second class citizens, compared to men.
- Women had fewer rights than men in areas like property, divorce rights and voting rights. Women were thought to be unsuitable for political decisions
- Women's work included areas such as factory work, secretaries, teaching, working with textiles. Women were not invited to work in business, politics or finance. Middle and upper-class women rarely worked. Working-class women often had no choice.
- Women were expected to give up work when they got married to care for the home.

Suffrage; from peaceful to violent

- Millicent Fawcett established the NUWSS in 1897. Their aim was female suffrage achieved through peaceful means. They wrote pamphlets and articles, petitioned MPs and went on marches.
- The peaceful nature of the suffragists was easy for government to ignore. Some in the movement felt the suffragist movement was too tame.
- In 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst established the Suffragette movement (WSPU) who's slogan became "deeds not words".
- Suffragette protests became more violent with acts such as smashing shop windows, blowing up letter boxes, cutting communication wires, blowing up the Prime Ministers house.
- The aim was for suffragette acts to gain media attention.

Suffragette vs. Government

- **1910 – Black Friday.** Violent clashes between police and suffragettes.
- As Suffragette acts became more violent, the government took a harder line against them. Suffragettes were imprisoned for their actions, but were not treating as political prisoners (treated differently).
- Suffragettes in prison went on hunger-strike, protesting against not being seen as political prisoners. The government passed **The Cat and Mouse Act (1913)** which released hunger-striking suffragettes, to be recaptured when they regained strength.

Help or hinder?

- Helped**
- Suffragist easily ignored.
 - Grabbed media attention – increased support.
 - Showed desperation of women for suffrage.
 - Scared the government into action.

- Hindered**
- Some public opinion turned against Suffragette.
 - Why should they get a voice if break laws?
 - Government action becomes harsher

Timeline

