

# 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**

19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century

- Women in 19<sup>th</sup> 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

