

International Women's Day

WORKSHEET A

On March 8th this year, events marking International Women's Day (IWD) were held in many countries around the world. It was a hundred years since the very first IWD had been held, in a handful of European countries, in 1911.

In most countries, the events have a political tone: they tend to celebrate the advances women have made towards economic, social, and political equality with men, and to press for change in those areas of life where there is still progress to be made.

In other countries, meanwhile, March 8th is traditionally more about expressing an appreciation of women: it is a day on which men give presents to their wives, girlfriends, and mothers, and it therefore has some similarities with Valentine's Day (celebrated in many countries in February) and Mother's Day (celebrated, for example, in the United States in May).

Back in 1911, the first IWD events in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland were certainly political. They were protests by women against forms of gender discrimination that would now be unthinkable in most parts of the world: almost nowhere were women allowed to vote (Australia, Finland, and New Zealand were the only countries where women voted in national elections), and Finland was the only country with any female members of a national parliament. The general expectation worldwide, across different continents and cultures, was that women would spend their lives largely in the home, devoting themselves to taking care of their husbands and children. The proportion of women who had paid employment was far lower than today, and when women did work outside the home they typically earned very little, meaning they were economically dependent on men.

A century later, gender inequality in employment – particularly pay inequality – is still one of the issues IWD tries to draw attention to: it remains common, of course, for women to earn less than men for doing exactly the same job.

Limited educational opportunities (there are many countries in which girls generally stay fewer years in school than boys) and domestic violence towards women have also been highlighted by events surrounding IWD in recent years.

And yet, as the IWD website notes, alongside the “negatives” there are plenty of “positives.” As just one example, to return to the issue of women elected to office, the change over the last hundred years has been significant. Since 1911, when the small group of women in the Finnish parliament (nineteen of them, to be precise) were the only females in public office worldwide, the governments of more than fifty different countries have been led by women. In 2011, at least one country on every continent has a female leader, including high-profile examples such as Brazil (Dilma Rousseff), Germany (Angela Merkel), and Australia (Julia Gillard).

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Here are some simple definitions for words that appear in the text on Worksheet A. Find the words they refer to and fill in the blanks.

1. g _ _ _ _ r (noun): the fact of being either male or female
2. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (noun): unfair treatment of someone because of their gender, race, or other personal features
3. _ _ _ _ _ _ (noun): a very small number of people or things
4. If you _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (phrasal verb) something, you try in a determined way to achieve it.
5. If you _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ yourself _ _ (phrasal verb) something, you spend most of your time and effort doing it.
6. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (adjective): very important, large, or noticeable
7. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (adjective) violence: violence that takes place in the home between family members, especially adults (the victims are usually women)
8. A _ _ _ _ _ - _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (adjective) person or thing is often seen in public or on TV, or mentioned in newspapers.
9. _ _ _ _ _ (verb): celebrate with a ceremony or other event for a special occasion
10. If you _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (phrase) something, you make people notice it.
11. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (noun): the feeling you have when you are grateful to someone
12. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (noun): a strong complaint or disagreement
13. If you are _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (adjective) on someone, you need them in order to live or succeed.
14. If you _ _ _ _ _ (verb) a meeting or event, you organize it. (The verb is often used in the passive: an event that is _ _ _ _ _ on a certain day takes place on that day.)
15. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (adjective): impossible to imagine

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

One word has been taken out of each line of the text: how many of the missing words can you remember and replace?

- (1) On March 8th this year, events marking International Women's Day (IWD) held in
- (2) many countries around the world. It was a hundred years the very first IWD had
- (3) been held, in a handful of countries, in 1911.
- (4) In most countries, the events a political tone: they tend to celebrate the
- (5) advances women made towards economic, social, and political equality with men,
- (6) and to press change in those areas of life where there is still progress to be made.
- (7) In other countries, meanwhile, March 8th is traditionally more expressing an
- (8) appreciation women: it is a day on which men give presents to their wives, girlfriends,
- (9) and mothers, and it therefore has some with Valentine's Day (celebrated in
- (10) many countries in February) and Mother's Day (celebrated, for example, in United
- (11) States May).
- (12) Back in 1911, the first IWD in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and
- (13) Switzerland were certainly political. They were protests by women forms of
- (14) gender discrimination that would now be in most parts of the world: almost
- (15) nowhere were women allowed to (Australia, Finland, and New Zealand were the
- (16) only countries women voted in national elections), and Finland was the only
- (17) country with any female members of a national. The general expectation
- (18) worldwide, across different continents and cultures, was that would spend their
- (19) lives largely in the home, themselves to taking care of their husbands and
- (20) children. The proportion of women who had paid employment was far lower today,
- (21) and when women did work outside the home they typically earned very, meaning
- (22) they were economically dependent men.
- (23) A century later, gender in employment – particularly pay inequality – is
- (24) still one of the issues IWD tries to draw to: it remains common, of course, for
- (25) women to earn less than men for doing exactly the job.
- (26) Limited educational opportunities (there are many countries in girls
- (27) generally stay years in school than boys) and domestic violence towards women
- (28) have also been highlighted by events surrounding IWD in recent.
- (29) And yet, as the IWD website notes, alongside the "negatives" there are of
- (30) "positives." As just one example, to return to the issue of women elected to, the
- (31) change over the last hundred years has been. Since 1911, when the small
- (32) group of women in the parliament (nineteen of them, to be precise) were the only
- (33) females in public office worldwide, the governments of more fifty different
- (34) countries have been led by women. In 2011, at least one country on every has a
- (35) female leader, including high-profile examples as Brazil (Dilma Rousseff),
- (36) Germany (Angela Merkel), Australia (Julia Gillard).