

1. The basics

Gender (or sex-based) discrimination: it includes sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, and unequal pay for women who do the same jobs as men.

Discrimination in education: in admission, recruitment, financial aids, discipline, grading... **Discrimination in employment: sex-based wage discrimination** (it occurs whenever women who perform the same work as men are paid less than their masculine colleagues); **pregnancy discrimination; sexual harassment** (whenever the workplace has become permeated with inappropriate sexual behaviour); **discrimination in hiring and firing practices** (whenever a job applicant is treated differently than another, based solely on gender); **gender bias in the promotion process** and **“glass ceiling”** (whenever gender is an obstacle hindering the advancement of women at work). The **“glass ceiling”** metaphor is used to represent the invisible barrier that keeps women (or other minorities) from rising beyond a certain level in the hierarchy.

2. Women's response: feminism

Feminism: it is a range of political and social movements that intend to achieve political, economic, social and personal equality for women.

Types of feminism: liberal feminism (a movement that worked to integrate women in the structure of mainstream society via political and legal reform: it was the preferred approach of the **Suffragettes and the Women's social Political Union** in the UK in the early 20th century); **radical feminism** (a radical movement [≈ 1967-1975] that sprung out of the civil rights movements); **socialist-Marxist feminism** (a movement that attributed the oppression of women to the capitalist system: it has died out); **cultural feminism** (whereas radical feminists wanted to reform society, cultural feminists have been working to build a women's culture); **eco-feminism** (it is based on the idea that our patriarchal society exploits its resources regardless of the long-term consequences; eco-feminists resist patriarchal culture by turning to vegetarianism, protecting nature in the meantime); **individual feminism** (a movement that calls for women's responsibility for their own lives; sexuality is considered a means of female empowerment; I-feminists no longer look to government for change).

3. Policy options for gender equality

Equal (employment) opportunity: the principle according to which all people should be treated similarly. Qualification should prevail over sex, race or sexual orientation.

Affirmative action programmes: meritocratic policies that aim to introduce **fairness** in the recruitment process via financial assistance for female applicants, gender-neutral recruitment...

Positive discrimination strategies: whenever an employer shows a preference for hiring or promoting members of a minority group using quotas. The **law on parity** in France (2000) is often considered a form of positive discrimination.

Gender parity

Facts and dates

1. The legal framework in the UK

1970: the **Equal Pay Act**; **1975:** the **Sex Discrimination Act** (prohibits discrimination based on gender and marital status in employment, education and provision of services); **2002:** the **Sex Discrimination Act** amended the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act; **2006 and 2010:** the **Equality Acts** (protect people from discrimination at work); **2010:** the **UK Equality Strategy** – building a fairer Britain: a report published by D. Cameron's government; **2011:** **Think, Act and Report** (a government initiative providing a framework to help companies think about gender equality in the workplace).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission: a non-governmental body which works for the promotion and enforcement of equality and non-discrimination laws in the UK.

The Government Equalities Office: a government department in charge of promoting and improving gender equality within the UK government.

2. The legal framework in the US

1963: the **Equal Pay Act** becomes a federal law (employers must give men and women doing the same job equal pay regardless of their race, religion, or sex); **1964:** Title VII of the **Civil Rights Act** (bars employment discrimination based on race, sex, and other grounds); **1967:** **Civil Rights Protections** extended to women (Executive Order 11375 expands the affirmative action policies of 1965 [promoting the realisation of equal employment opportunity] to prevent discrimination); **1968:** the **Fair Housing Act** (protects people from discrimination in the sale, rental or financing of a dwelling); **1972:** Title IX of the **Education Amendments** (schools receiving federal funds have to provide equal access to education for men and women); **1974:** the **Equal Credit Opportunity Act**; **1978:** the **Pregnancy Discrimination Act**; **2002:** the **Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act** (a law that enables workers to sue for pay discrimination).