

THE BEST PLACE TO BE A WOMAN?

Watch the [video](#) titled “The Best Place To Be A Woman?” by The Economist.

1 LET'S WARM UP

Today we are going to explore the topic of equality and women's rights. Take a couple of minutes to write the names of six important women in your life. Once you have decided, work in groups to discuss the questions below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

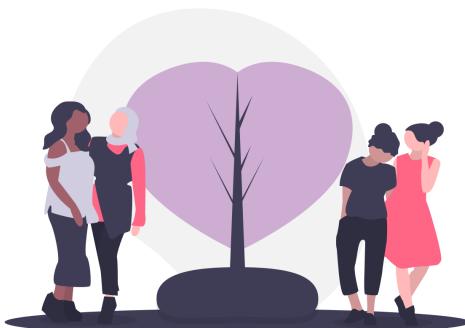
4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Questions:

- a) What qualities do these six women possess that inspire you?
- b) Can you share a memorable experience you've had with any of these women?
- c) How have these women influenced your perspective on gender equality and women's rights?
- d) What challenges have these women faced in their lives, and how have they overcome them?
- e) What lessons have you learned from these women that you apply to your own life?



2 WORK, WORK, WORK

Study the jobs below, then put them into the relevant boxes. Once you have decided on each job's position. Discuss the questions as a class.

- Teacher
- Engineer
- Chef
- Tennis player
- Firefighter
- Dentist

- Nurse
- Construction worker
- Childcare worker
- Police officer
- Gardener
- Soldier

Place the jobs above into the relevant categories below.

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Jobs better suited to women. | |
| Jobs better suited to men. | |
| Jobs they do equally well. | |

Questions:

1. Why do you think women are underrepresented in some of those jobs?
2. Why do you think some of these jobs are often gendered in our society?
3. How have gender stereotypes affected the ways in which men and women are perceived in these jobs?
4. How might gender discrimination impact a person's ability to succeed in these jobs?
5. What can be done to help women pursue careers in male-dominated fields?

3 THE BEST PLACE TO BE A WOMAN

Study the quote below taken from the [video](#), then complete the exercise.

Today, women around the globe have less access to power, wealth, and education than men. But one tiny island is leading the world in bridging these gaps. Iceland is pioneering ways to get more mothers back to work, to root out gender stereotypes, and to close the pay gap. It's a human rights issue, isn't it? Paying the same wage for equally valuable jobs. Could Iceland inspire the world to solve one of its greatest problems?

1. Do you agree that women have less power, wealth, and education than men?
2. Discuss the meaning of pioneering.
3. Give an example of a gender stereotype and how it negatively affects people's lives.
4. Is there a gender pay gap in your country? Give an example.
5. What lessons could your country learn from Iceland?

Work in groups. Think of eight countries, then rank them from 1-8 on equality, with 1 being the most equal and 8 being the least equal.

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.
6. _____.
7. _____.
8. _____.



4

GENDER EQUALITY IN SCHOOLS

The video explores how some schools in Iceland work to improve gender equality. Study the quote and complete the exercise.

"Iceland has topped gender equality rankings for nearly a decade. One of the secrets to their success: start early. This kindergarten in the capital of Reykjavik focuses on challenging extreme gender stereotypes before they take root in boys and girls. It's a mission that's led to the creation of 17 schools across this tiny country. All focused on developing a healthy balance of characteristics in both sexes. Girls and boys are separated to allow girls to nurture traits traditionally viewed as masculine, like being bold, independent, and taking risks. And boys are given time to learn traits traditionally viewed as feminine. Like being more group oriented, empathetic, and caring. And the signs are that this is working. Research suggests that in later years, children from this school have a greater understanding of gender equality when compared to children from other schools. "

Find synonyms for the following words from the text.

1. self-sufficient. **independent**.
2. manly. **masculine**
3. compassionate. **caring / empathetic**
4. courageous. **bold**
5. are embedded. **take root**
6. prejudices. **stereotypes**

Discuss the following questions as a class.

- a) How important is it to challenge gender stereotypes from an early age, and why?
- b) What are some of the benefits of separating girls and boys in kindergarten, and allowing them to learn traditionally gendered traits?
- c) How effective do you think this approach to teaching gender equality is, and why?
- d) What are some other ways that schools and educators can promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes?
- e) Do you think this approach to teaching gender equality would work in other countries and cultures? Why or why not?
- f) What can parents and caregivers do to help promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes in their own families and communities?

5

STATUTORY PATERNITY LEAVE

The video explores how Iceland is providing statutory paternity leave to improve gender equality. Study the quote and complete the exercise.

Iceland is also promoting gender equality by encouraging fathers to share the childcare burden with mothers. In 2000, it introduced what is known as a Daddy Quota. Three months Statutory Paternity Leave. It's an allowance that goes much further than most other countries in the world. Here, over 70 percent of fathers take up the full 3 months leave. Why? Because the state covers 80 percent of his salary during this period, up to a cap of \$4,600 a month. One beneficiary of this generous system is Igor Bianason, who's looking after his son Vala. Igor believes the high cost of the Daddy Quota to taxpayers is justified because it helps get more women into work.

Find words from the text that match the definitions below.

1. **Gender equality** - to believe and promote equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for all genders.
2. **Paternity leave** - a period of time granted to fathers or other caregivers following the birth or adoption of a child, during which they are entitled to take time off work.
3. **Beneficiary** - someone who receives something beneficial, such as money or property, from someone else.
4. **Justified** - to have a good reason for doing something, or something that is reasonable.
5. **daddy quota** - a policy introduced in Iceland in 2000 that provides three months of statutory paternity leave for fathers.

Discuss the following questions as a class.

- a) How effective do you think the Daddy Quota policy has been in promoting gender equality in Iceland?
- b) What do you think are some of the reasons why other countries have not implemented similar policies to the Daddy Quota?
- c) How does Iceland's Daddy Quota policy impact taxpayers?
- d) How might the Daddy Quota policy affect workplace culture and gender roles in Iceland?
- e) What are some of the ways in which fathers can benefit from taking paternity leave, both personally and for their families?
- f) In what ways can policies like the Daddy Quota contribute to a more equitable and just society?

6 EQUAL PAY

The video explores how Iceland is closing the pay gap to improve gender equality. Study the quote and complete the exercise.

In Iceland, men are still paid nearly 6 percent more than women for similar work. This year, Iceland became the first country in the world to pass legislation, not just to expose, but to tackle the gender pay gap. Companies with over 25 employees, like Reykjavik Energy, now have to prove they are paying men and women equally for similar jobs. Every job at the company must be measured against a set of criteria. This produces a score. For jobs with the same score, workers must be paid the same. When Reykjavik Energy used this pay calculator, the inequalities came into sharp and immediate focus. We noticed that there was a pay gap between the unskilled workers that were outside and the unskilled workers inside. The outside unskilled workers are mainly men and the unskilled workers inside, that's the cleaning staff, the staff in the kitchen, are mostly women.

What's important to keep in mind is the gender pay gap. It's not there because there are a couple of evil men making decisions to pay women less. It's this unconscious bias that we all have. We place more value on traditionally male dominated jobs. The company rectified this by raising the wages of its female employees. Critics of the law point out there will be significant financial consequences for companies as they rectify their pay inequalities. But many argue this is a necessary price to pay.

Based on the text, decide if the following statements are true or false:

1. In Iceland, men and women are paid equally for similar jobs. (**False**)
2. The new legislation in Iceland requires companies to prove they are paying men and women equally for similar jobs. (**True**)
3. Every job at Reykjavik Energy must be measured against a set of criteria to determine equal pay. (**True**)
4. The pay calculator used by Reykjavik Energy showed inequalities between skilled and unskilled workers. (**False**)
5. The gender pay gap exists because of conscious decisions made by individuals to pay women less. (**False**)
6. Critics of the new law in Iceland argue that there will be no financial consequences for companies as they rectify their pay inequalities. (**True**)



Discuss the following questions as a class.

- a) How significant is the gender pay gap in Iceland and what are some of the factors that contribute to it?
- b) What are some of the benefits and potential drawbacks of the new legislation requiring companies to prove they are paying men and women equally for similar jobs?
- c) How might the pay calculator used by Reykjavik Energy be used by other companies or organisations to promote gender pay equality?
- d) What role do unconscious biases play in creating gender pay gaps, and how can these biases be identified and stopped?
- e) What are some of the challenges faced by companies in fixing pay inequalities, and how can these challenges be addressed?
- f) How might gender pay equality contribute to a more just and equitable society, both in Iceland and globally?
- g) What are some of the potential consequences of not addressing gender pay gaps, both for individuals and for society as a whole?



7

DEBATE

Study the arguments, then choose which side you agree with, explaining why. Use the language from the table to expand your argument. Have fun!

1. Women are better leaders than men.
2. Men have more advantages in society than women.
3. Women are more affected by gender stereotypes than men.
4. Women experience more workplace discrimination than men.
5. Men are more responsible for the gender pay gap than women.
6. Women face more societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles than men.
7. Men and women are equally capable of performing physically demanding tasks.
8. Men face greater challenges in achieving work-life balance than women.

| | |
|---|--|
| Express an opinion <p>It seems to me that...</p> <p>I feel that...</p> <p>I'm absolutely convinced that...</p> <p>In my opinion,...</p> <p>I believe / suppose / feel (that)...</p> | Express disagreement <p>I don't agree with you about...</p> <p>I can't accept your view that...</p> <p>I have a different opinion...</p> <p>I'm not sure if...</p> <p>I'm not convinced that...</p> |
| Express pro's and con's <p>There are two sides to this point...</p> <p>On the one hand..., on the other hand...</p> <p>An argument for / against is...</p> <p>Some people think that..., others say that...</p> <p>The advantages / disadvantages are...</p> | Summarise <p>So, in conclusion...</p> <p>To summarise...</p> <p>Overall, it is clear that...</p> <p>As a result...</p> <p>The bottom line is...</p> |



8

QUOTES

Discuss the following quotes, related to gender equality and women's rights, as a class. Use the prompts (a-d) to help guide your discussion.

- a) Discuss the meaning of each quote.
- b) How could you apply the meaning of each quote to your life?
- c) To what extent do you agree/disagree with each quote?
- d) Can you think of any real-life example where you have seen the meaning of each quote in practice?

Quotes

1. "The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America."
2. "I have the right to be treated equally, with dignity and respect, and you do too."
3. "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception."
4. "International Women's Day is a day to celebrate women's achievements, but also to recognize the work that remains to be done to achieve gender equality."
5. "Gender equality is not a women's issue, it's a human rights issue. It affects us all."

9

WOULD YOU RATHER

Let's finish the class with a fun game. The questions are not based on the lesson topic. Read each scenario, then choose which one you most agree with. This is your chance to practise speaking and improve your English so say as much as you can, and have fun!

1. Would you rather have the ability to teleport anywhere in the world or have the ability to time travel?
2. Would you rather have the power to control the elements (fire, water, earth, air) or have the power to control other people's emotions?
3. Would you rather be able to speak and understand every language in the world or be able to communicate with animals?
4. Would you rather live in a world without the internet or live in a world without air conditioning and heating?

HOMEWORK

Read the article then complete the writing exercise on the following page.

1 ARTICLE

Gender equality, the concept that all individuals should have equal access to opportunities regardless of their gender, is a fundamental human right. However, the degree to which gender equality is achieved varies greatly from country to country, depending on various factors, such as cultural norms, historical factors, legal frameworks, and socio-economic conditions.

In some countries, gender equality has made significant strides, with women occupying high positions in politics, business, and other sectors. For instance, in Iceland, which consistently tops global gender equality rankings, women occupy nearly half of parliamentary seats and hold key positions in government and business. The country has also implemented progressive policies such as paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers, gender quotas, and equal pay legislation.

In contrast, in many other countries, gender inequality remains pervasive, with women facing significant barriers to accessing education, employment, and political power. For example, in Saudi Arabia, women were only granted the right to drive in 2018, and their movement and behaviour is still tightly restricted by a male guardianship system. In Afghanistan, women have long been denied basic rights such as education and employment, and their situation has worsened following the Taliban's takeover in 2021.

In many countries, cultural norms and attitudes towards gender roles play a significant role in perpetuating gender inequality. In some societies, traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained, with men and women expected to adhere to strict social

norms and behaviours. For example, in India, women are often expected to prioritise their domestic duties and marriage over their careers, they face significant discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

Legal frameworks also play a critical role in promoting or hindering gender equality. In some countries, laws and policies explicitly discriminate against women, while in others, laws may appear gender-neutral but are applied in ways that disadvantage women. For instance, in Iran, women are required to cover their heads and bodies in public and are subject to discriminatory laws that limit their freedom of movement, marriage, and divorce.

Socio-economic factors also impact gender equality. In many countries, women face economic marginalisation, with limited access to education, training, and formal employment opportunities. This can lead to a cycle of poverty and exclusion, making it difficult for women to achieve their full potential. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, women make up the majority of the agricultural workforce but have limited access to land ownership and credit, which creates more poverty.

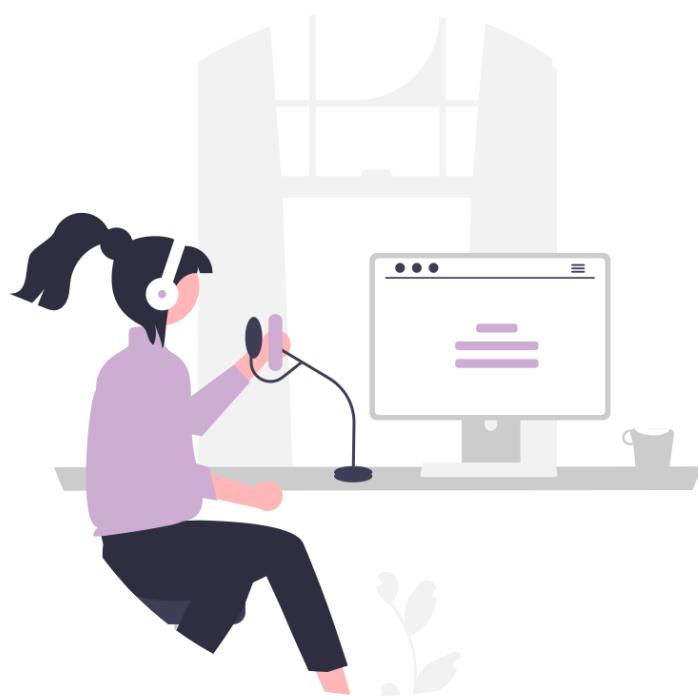
In conclusion, while gender equality is a universal human right, the degree to which it is achieved varies significantly from country to country. Factors such as cultural norms, legal frameworks, and socio-economic conditions all play a role in shaping the level of gender equality in a society. Achieving gender equality requires a sustained effort to dismantle discriminatory attitudes and practices and implement policies and programs that promote equal opportunities and rights for all individuals, regardless of their gender.

2

ARTICLE COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Check your understanding of the article by answering the following questions:

1. What is gender equality?
2. Does the level of gender equality vary from country to country?
3. What are some factors that contribute to differences in gender equality across countries?
4. Which country is considered to have the highest level of gender equality?
5. What are some policies that have been implemented in Iceland to promote gender equality?
6. Which country recently granted women the right to drive, and what other restrictions do women still face there?
7. What challenges do women face in India in terms of gender equality?
8. How do laws and policies impact gender equality?
9. How do socio-economic factors affect gender equality?
10. What is the majority of the agricultural workforce in sub-Saharan Africa, and what challenges do they face?
11. Is achieving gender equality a universal human right?
12. What steps can be taken to promote gender equality in different countries?



2 VOCABULARY EXERCISE

Match the words from the text to their definitions.

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Pervasive | 6. Harassment |
| 2. Ingrained | 7. Socio-economic |
| 3. Marginalisation | 8. Dismantle |
| 4. Quotas | 9. Exclusion |
| 5. Discrimination | 10. Land ownership |

Definitions

- a) A system of allocating a certain number of positions or opportunities to a specific group of people, typically a minority.
- b) The systematic mistreatment of an individual or group based on their characteristics such as race, sex, or age.
- c) The action of harassing someone, typically with repeated unpleasant behavior such as threats or insults.
- d) The state of being deprived of opportunities or being made to feel unwelcome or isolated.
- e) The process of taking apart a system, institution or practice.
- f) The condition of having limited social, economic, and political power or access to resources.
- g) Widely spread or present in a particular area or group.
- h) A sense of belonging that is so deeply rooted it is almost impossible to change.
- i) The legal right to own land or property.
- j) Relating to the interaction of social and economic factors in a community or society.
- k) The act of pushing a person or group to the edge or periphery of society.
- l) The process of treating something as insignificant or peripheral, often to the point of ignoring it altogether.

3 WRITING TASK

Use the blank sheet on the following page to write detailed answers to the questions.
Use the language and ideas presented throughout the lessons wherever possible.

1. How do cultural norms and attitudes towards gender roles affect gender equality in different countries?
2. What role do legal frameworks play in promoting or hindering gender equality in different countries?
3. What are some specific policies that countries with high levels of gender equality have implemented to achieve this?
4. What are some examples of gender discrimination and inequality faced by women in countries with low levels of gender equality?
5. How do socio-economic factors impact gender equality in different countries?
6. Can gender equality be achieved without addressing cultural attitudes towards gender roles?
7. What are some challenges that countries face when implementing gender equality policies?
8. How do global gender equality rankings measure and compare different countries' progress towards gender equality?
9. How do historical factors and past events affect gender equality in different countries?
10. What role does education play in promoting gender equality in different countries?
11. What are some examples of gender-based violence and harassment faced by women in different countries?
12. How can individuals and communities contribute to promoting gender equality in their own countries and globally?





Blank sheet for writing answers to the questions.