

## International Women's Day

March 8 is International Women's Day, but the global campaigns for equal rights for women continue all year round. Read more about #IWD in this article.

### Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercise.

### Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

#### Vocabulary

1. .... equality
2. .... a march
3. .... pay gap
4. .... harassment
5. .... a strike
6. .... inequality
7. .... momentum
8. .... a campaign

#### Definition

- a. an event in which a large number of people walk through a public space
- b. the force that keeps something moving
- c. repeated annoying, unpleasant or aggressive behaviour towards someone
- d. having the same rights, opportunities or social status between groups of people
- e. difference in wealth, opportunity or social status between people or groups
- f. the difference between the average pay of two groups of people
- g. a protest in which workers stop working
- h. a series of actions to achieve a specific objective

## International Women's Day

International Women's Day on 8 March is a day to celebrate the social, economic and political achievements of women, reflect on progress and demand gender equality. For over a hundred years, International Women's Day has put the spotlight onto issues affecting women all over the world. Today, International Women's Day belongs to everyone who believes that women's rights are human rights.

### Why do we need an International Women's Day?

Across the world, less than 15 per cent of the world's countries have a female leader. Only 24 per cent of senior managers are women and 25 per cent of companies have no female senior managers at all. Women do the lowest-paid jobs and earn less money for the same work. This difference in pay is called the gender pay gap, and for young women in many places, including Britain and the US, the gap is getting worse. Women are also more likely to do most of the housework and childcare. All of these problems affect women of colour even more than they do white women.

When it comes to healthcare and safety, women also face significant inequalities. An estimated 830 women a day die in childbirth. There are some shocking statistics for female murder too. Last year the UN found that 137 women a day were killed by their partner or former partner. Worldwide, over 50 per cent of female murders are committed by the victim's partner or family. When they have access to health education and care, women are also more likely to be ignored by doctors when they say they are in pain, and serious health problems are sometimes ignored for years.

## The history of Women's Day

In 1908, 15,000 women in New York went on strike because of low pay and terrible conditions in the factories where they worked. The following year, the Socialist Party of America organised a National Women's Day, and one year after that, there was a conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, about equality and women's right to vote. In Europe, the idea grew and became International Women's Day (IWD) for the first time in 1911 and the United Nations declared 8 March International Women's Day in 1975.

## What happens on 8 March?

In some countries, children and men give presents, flowers or cards to their mothers, wives, sisters or other women they know. But at the heart of International Women's Day lies women's rights. Across the world, there are protests and events to demand equality. Many women wear purple, a colour worn by women who campaigned for women's right to vote. Recently, marches and protests have gained force thanks to the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements against sexual harassment. There is still a lot of work to be done for gender equality. But women's movements all over the world are ready to do that work and are gaining momentum.

What are you going to do to celebrate or demand change on 8 March?

Sources:

<http://www.un.org/en/events/womensday/>

<https://www.internationalwomensday.com/>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en>

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/WHRD/WomenRightsAreHR.pdf>

## Tasks

### Task 1

Choose the correct answer.

1. How long has Women's Day been celebrated?
  - a. Less than 50 years
  - b. Less than 100 years
  - c. More than 100 years
  - d. More than 200 years
2. Which sentence is true?
  - a. Twenty-seven per cent of countries have a female leader.
  - b. A quarter of companies in the world have no female senior managers.
  - c. A quarter of companies have a female director.
  - d. None of the above
3. What signs are there that women in Britain do not have real equality today?
  - a. They do most of the work in the home.
  - b. They do the worst-paid jobs.
  - c. They get paid less than men.
  - d. All of the above
4. What did women NOT protest about in 1908 in New York?
  - a. Low pay
  - b. Bad working conditions
  - c. The right to vote
  - d. None of the above
5. What was the focus of the conference in Copenhagen in 1910?
  - a. Bad working conditions
  - b. Low pay
  - c. Sexual harassment
  - d. The right to vote
6. What colour is associated with IWD?
  - a. Purple
  - b. Pink
  - c. Black
  - d. White

### Discussion

How have things changed for women in your country? What still needs to change?

## Answers

### Preparation task

1. d
2. a
3. f
4. c
5. g
6. e
7. b
8. h

### Task 1

1. c
2. b
3. d
4. c
5. d
6. a