

# International Women's Day 2021

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### International Women's Day 2021

#ChooseToChallenge

Today is International Women's Day. All over the world organisations and communities are gearing up to celebrate women's achievements and rally for equality.

The goal of International Women's Day is to bring attention to

the social, political, economic, and cultural issues that women face, and to advocate for the advancement of women within all those areas. Organisers state: "Through purposeful collaboration, we can help women advance and unleash the limitless potential offered to economies the world over."

### How it all began

"My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone" – **Mary Wollstonecraft**

When we think of the Women's Rights Movement, our minds visualise the suffragette marches and the second wave of feminism which took place, mainly in the United States, during the 1960s and 70s. However, one of the first campaigners for women's rights Christine de Pizan, a poet and author at the court of King Charles VI of France and several French dukes. She wrote *The City of Ladies* in 1402, a book which celebrated famous women throughout history and explored themes such as the criminality of rape, the natural affinity in women to learn, and their talent for government. *The City of Ladies* is still considered to be one of the pioneering feminist texts.

In the UK, the modern women's rights movement began with Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and the publication of her ground-breaking book *Vindication on the Rights of Women*.

International Women's Day was first celebrated in 1911 during the first feminist wave (circa 1880-1920) where a million men and women rallied in support of women's rights. Originally called International Working Women's Day, over a million men and women attended rallies in Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. In 1922, the first female solicitor was admitted and the first female barrister called to the bar.

In 1977, the United Nations got behind International Women's

Day, declaring it a day “to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women’s rights.”

## **The 2021 International Women’s Day Theme**

The theme for International Women’s Day this year is #ChooseToChallenge. The [official website](#) states:

“A challenged world is an alert world. Individually, we’re all responsible for our own thoughts and actions – all day, every day.

We can all choose to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality. We can all choose to seek out and celebrate women’s achievements. Collectively, we can all help create an inclusive world.

From challenge comes change, so let’s all **choose to challenge.**”

Organisers are asking people to show their support by striking the Choose To Challenge pose and sharing images on [social media](#) using #ChooseToChallenge #IWD2021.

## **Get Involved**

The Coronavirus pandemic has compounded a longstanding problem: women around the world often struggle to fully participate in economic and public life. A recent [study](#) showed women, on average, enjoy only three-quarters of the legal rights men have, and they suffer from pronounced disparities regarding pay and accommodations for parenthood. The picture is even bleaker in developing and patriarchal countries.

There has been a significant rise in cases of domestic abuse, and the impact of the pandemic on women’s mental health and employment cannot be denied. Statistics show that women were

more likely to work in a sector which has been shut down by the pandemic, and that mothers were 1.5 times more likely than fathers to have lost their job since lockdown started. For women who continued to work during lockdown, there has been a significant increase in time spent (based on hours per day) doing housework or caring for children, with paid working hours being almost double for men in a working day compared to women.

During these unprecedented times, there are many ways we can show our support:

- make donations, or volunteer your time to women's organisations and charities;
- become a mentor for young women;
- launch initiatives within the workplace to raise awareness and provide a safe platform for women's voices to be heard;
- implement flexible working arrangements;
- call out stereotypes and gender bias;
- celebrate women's achievements.

Looking back through history, it is great to see the positive developments that have been made. International Women's Day is a celebration of triumphs, but also a reminder that there is still much work to be done to achieve fairness and equality for all.

We need to work together to highlight areas where girls and women still face inequality and danger, and actively challenge gender-based stereotypes, bias and inequality.

Human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights – **Hillary Clinton**

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