**Week 3:**

**A Short History of Gender Inequality**

**in New Zealand**



**Success Criteria:**

Students will be able to recount by the end of the week, key aspects of the history of inequality among women in New Zealand in relation to such areas as voting rights, social status and treatment by men, political engagement in national elections, and income.

During colonial times when the first Europeans arrived in New Zealand, traditional gender roles prevailed with women expected to fulfill their domestic (home) and caregiving roles. Many women did not attend school or dropped out at a young age and got married and stayed at home.

New Zealand became famous for gender equality as in 1893, it became the first country to give women the right to vote in national elections.

**Task 1:** Watch the video clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlTh_nFc2Wg> (6:14 sec.)

**Task 2: The 5-minute Write:** Write a summary of the key point of this video clip in between 1 and 3 sentences.

# Gender Inequality Assignment:

# At the bottom of this section is a reading on the History of Gender Inequality in New Zealand. Based on the reading, answer the following questions. We will be doing this is groups of 2 or 3 (max – absolutely no more than 3):

# Section A (‘Kiwi Women were Once Second-Class Citizens’)

# Write down several key ideas in the form of dot-points

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**Section B (Prime Ministers and Party Leaders)**

**Name the 3 women who have served as Kiwi Prime Ministers and the years they served.**

**2a.**

**2b.**

**2c.**

**Section C (‘Members of Parliament’)**

**Write down several key ideas in the form of dot-points.**

**1. In what year could women in New Zealand first stand for Parliament as an MP?**

**2. What year were New Zealand women able to vote in local elections?**

**3. What year were they able to vote in national elections?**

**4. Between the years 1979 and 2016, how has the number of women elected to local governments – increased?**

**Section D (‘Paid Jobs’)**

**1. During the 1800s, what percentage of Kiwi women had paid jobs?**

**2. During this period, what jobs were they not hired for?**

**3. Those who did have paid work usually left once what happened?**

**4. In these paid jobs, how much more did men make than women on average?**

**Section E (‘Education’)**

**1. When were females first able to attend university in New Zealand?**

**2. During the 19th century (1800s), why weren’t women encouraged to attend school and university?**

**3. This trend eventually changed and by 2014, what percentage of women were attending New Zealand universities?**

**4. Why did ‘Domestic Science’ become a mandatory subject (one you had no choice but to take in school) in 1917?**

**5. For Māori girls, what was the focus of their education?**

**6. Why were women not encouraged to take subjects like Math?**

**7. In what ways are boys said to have been treated unequally in school?**

**6. Section F (’Sports’)**

**1. In the mid-1800s, how did most Kiwis feel about women playing sport?**

**2. What were some of the sports games that the early settler women played?**

# Reading:

# The History of Gender Inequality

# in New Zealand

# Source: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand <https://teara.govt.nz/en/gender-inequalities>

# Section A. Kiwi Women were Once Second-Class Citizens

Women in New Zealand have made great progress over the years and now are in a position of legal equality with men. In the mid-19th century (the 1800s), women could not vote, stand for election, serve on a jury, sit as a judge, or keep their New Zealand nationality if they married a foreigner. In the late 1800s, women won the vote; in the 20th century they won the right to stand for Parliament, to retain their own nationality after marriage, to serve on a jury, and to sit as justices of the peace and judges.

### Section B. Prime ministers and party leaders

In the early 21st century New Zealand led the world in terms of women holding leading political positions. There have been three women prime ministers: Jenny Shipley (1997–99), who led the National Party from 1997 to 2001; Helen Clark, the first woman to become prime minister following an election (1999–2008), who was leader of the Labour Party from 1993 to 2008; and Jacinda Ardern (2017-2023).

### The vote

The campaign for women’s suffrage – the right to vote in national elections – was led by the first wave of women activists in the 1880s and 1890s, working through national organisations that predated political parties. Their campaign succeeded in 1893.

### Section C. Members of Parliament

The legal ban that prevented women standing for Parliament reflected strong disapproval of, and disbelief in, women’s suitability for positions of public authority. The law was changed more easily than custom. Although women could stand for election from 1919 – 26 years after winning the right to vote – it was not until the 1980s that they were more than a tiny proportion of members of Parliament.

### Local government

Local government has a big impact on women’s everyday lives. Women who paid rates on properties were able to vote and stand for election to local bodies from 1867. [Elizabeth Yates](https://teara.govt.nz/node/129317) was elected mayor of Onehunga in 1893, becoming the first woman mayor in the British Empire.

By 1979 women held around 20% of elected local authority positions. The peak year for women’s representation on city, district and regional councils was 1998, when 31% of councillors and 25% of mayors were women. These proportions declined as local government reorganisation reduced the number of elected positions from over 5,000 to around 1,700, narrowing an important path into politics for women. In the 2016 local body elections, 38% of those elected and 19% of mayors were women.

**Section D (‘Paid Jobs)**

### The 19th century

Paid employment was the exception rather than the rule for New Zealand women in the 19th century (1800s). In 1874 a fifth of women over 15 had paid jobs, and in 1891 the proportion was still less than a quarter. Domestic service, tailoring, shop work and, as the century wore on, factory work absorbed most employed women.

Women were excluded from many occupations. Banks, businesses, post and telegraph offices, teaching and nursing, and the professions and trades (apart from tailoring) were male-only or male-dominated. In the later 19th and early 20th centuries, women began working in many of these areas. Wages paid to women were substantially lower than – often about half of – those of men doing the same or similar work, and they were generally kept in low-level positions.

Women almost invariably left paid work when they married. Many were probably happy to do so – running a household and raising children was a demanding job – but even those who wished to continue in employment mostly could not stay on.

# Section E. Education

Gender discrimination in education occurred for many years in New Zealand. Girls have had to put up with less generous facilities, lower expectations and a narrower range of subjects. In the workforce, the jobs related to these subject areas have been less well paid.

### Access to school and university

Primary schooling became universally free and available from 1877. The first girls’ secondary school opened in Dunedin in 1871, 15 years after the first boys’ secondary school. While access to primary school was granted automatically, girls’ access to secondary education required vigorous campaigning. Entry to university was relatively easily negotiated once secondary schooling was approved. Women were able to attend university once the University of Otago opened in 1871.

### Attendance

Educating girls was seen by many 19th-century parents as a waste of time. Their daughters would marry, keep house and raise children, none of which needed formal schooling. At both primary and secondary levels, girls were less likely than boys to attend school. Their performance of household tasks was a significant reason for this.

Girls remained less likely to attend school, especially secondary school, in the early decades of the 20th century. From 1944, when secondary school became compulsory to the age of 14, girls’ attendance matched that of boys.

Those going to university were an elite, and the numbers of women fluctuated. During the two world wars the percentage of women students increased, but during the economic depression of the 1930s (particularly when the teachers’ colleges were closed), the percentage of women dropped. It did not recover to its 1920s level until the 1970s. In the 21st century there were more female than male undergraduates. In 2014, 61.3% of New Zealand graduates were women.

### Limiting learning

A servant shortage and fears that higher education ‘unfitted’ women for marriage and motherhood led to domestic science becoming compulsory for all girls from 1917. It displaced all other science teaching, except for botany, below the sixth form (‘Domestic Science’ meant how to take care of the home – do washing, cleaning, cooking, etc.).

Schooling for girls in the Native School system showed the same tendency. Māori girls were destined for motherhood and the ‘rescue’ of their 'race'; to this end, domestic skills, health and hygiene were prominent in their curriculum.

The same focus on domestic skills affected the technical schools that were set up from 1900. Girls could take courses in typing, shorthand and book-keeping – the trade-related courses boys took were closed to them. In some technical schools they were also taught domestic skills.

**Difficult and expensive subjects**

There were other differences in the secondary curriculum. Mathematics in particular was identified as too taxing for girls, whose powers of ‘origination’ were seen as inadequate. Greek was not taught because of its content: delicate and pure-minded girls should not be exposed to references to homosexuality. Physics and chemistry were also less likely to be taught in girls’ schools, in part because of the expense of laboratories and equipment, but also because of a lack of female teachers trained in these subjects.

**Changing expectations, changing achievements**

The early secondary schools encouraged high aspirations among their students, but in the 20th century many girls were steered toward traditional occupations that were poorly paid and relatively low-status. An exception to this were elite schools, which continued to encourage able students.

In the 1970s and early 1980s some parents, teachers and students, influenced by the resurgent feminist movement, challenged the range of subjects taught and schools’ limited aspirations for girls. In the late 20th century expectations of girls increased and their achievements in high school surpassed those of boys. They also began to study a wider range of subjects.

By the late 1990s and early 21st century, girls were performing better than boys in national school qualifications completed in the last three years of high school. National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) qualifications were introduced in 2002, replacing School Certificate and Bursary qualifications. In 2015 girls performed better than boys in both external and internal assessment at all three NCEA levels and University Entrance. Girls and boys performed almost equally in New Zealand Scholarship examinations – the highest level school-leaving qualification. However, while girls were succeeding in subjects like mathematics, information technology and physics, they were still less likely to pursue further qualifications and careers in these fields.

**University**

Although women were able to attend universities from the time they were established, areas of study such as medicine and law were almost closed to them. Arts and humanities subjects were regarded as more womanly. In 1911, as part of the drive to encourage efficient home management, diploma and degree courses in ‘home science’ were introduced. It was not until the 1990s that women appeared in significant numbers in courses such as law and engineering.

By the 21st century, women were more likely to participate in tertiary education (including university education) than men. In 2015 women were 61% of those enrolled in bachelors and postgraduate qualifications. They were, however, still under-represented in what were increasingly identified as STEM subjects – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. While they were over 60% of those enrolled in Bachelor of Science degrees in the 2010s, they were more likely to be involved in the health sciences than in engineering, information and communications technology or physics. As a result, special programmes were established in the early 21st century to encourage women into careers using new technologies in which there will continue to be job growth.

**Discrimination against boys?**

From the 1990s, as girls’ educational results improved, there was increasing concern that education discriminated against boys. Teaching methods and, at primary-school level, the predominance of female teachers were seen as supportive of girls’ rather than boys’ learning. Boys tended to learn to read later than girls (as they do internationally), but this (like some other differences) was strongly affected by ethnicity, with Māori boys most likely to have difficulties. The socio-economic background of students was also a factor, as was the pressure on boys not to be associated with ‘feminine’ activities such as reading. Research done in the 1990s found that being taught by women did not reduce boys’ academic achievement.

New Zealand children’s performances in international tests applied in 2015 indicated that boys performed slightly better than girls of similar ages in mathematics, while girls did much better than boys in reading. There were no significant differences in their achievements in science. Average achievement was above the OECD average for both sexes.

**6. Section F (’Sports’)**

In the mid-19th century women settlers in New Zealand did not play sport. The clothing of elite Pakehā women limited breathing and movement. The ideal feminine beauty was soft, delicate, and pale. Feminine conduct required gentleness and grace, restraint and cooperation rather than the vigorous play of muscles, aggression and competition. Public activity for elite women was approved of only if it was decorous.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sport contributed to immense changes in women’s lives. Constricting clothing was loosened and lightened, and what was seen as an attractive appearance came to include a healthy glow. Public activity and strenuous physicality became more acceptable for girls and women.

By the 21st century women played every sport men did, competing at the highest levels.

### Early games

Women settlers began to play sport in the 1870s. First croquet, then lawn tennis, swimming, golf, cycling, hockey and netball (then known as basketball) were tried. Many of these games were new to New Zealand. This engagement in sometimes vigorous activity was often commented on, not always approvingly.

When women tried rugby, cricket and cycling there was particularly strong opposition. Women who played sport, especially sports already strongly associated with men, were seen as masculinising themselves and upsetting the balance between the sexes.

Access to swimming pools and playing fields was a constant problem. When women shared facilities with men, it was almost always on a less-than-equal basis.

### Early 20th century: sporting activity increases

By the 1910s, sport and physical activity was supported by a number of authorities, primarily as a means to a traditional end: ensuring that women were healthy, competent mothers. Despite this approval, women’s sport continued to suffer from limited access to sports grounds at school and post-school levels.

### Playing fields

There was an explosion of sporting activity amongst less privileged working girls and women after the [First World War](https://teara.govt.nz/node/207058). Often organised by the YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association), company-based teams competed with each other locally and nationally. The YWCA built gyms for female members and promoted fitness classes for women.

### Decision-making and coaching

Men often dominated decision-making in women’s sports. When a player proposed in 1908 that officers of the New Zealand Women’s Hockey Association should be female, the suggestion was ridiculed. A century later, women continued to be under-represented at decision-making levels in many sports. A breakthrough occurred in 2016 when Farah Palmer, a former captain of the national team, became the first woman elected to the board of New Zealand Rugby.

A 2007 study of gender and sport found that of the 328 people serving on national sports boards, 87 (27%) were women. There had been no change in the gender balance of national sports boards since the mid-1990s. In 2011, 65% of New Zealand Olympic sport boards reached the 20% female-membership threshold set by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (compared to 52% of boards in 2007), while 13% of the boards had no women (22% in 2007). In 2015 the New Zealand Olympic Committee’s efforts to involve women as sports managers and team members were recognised at the IOC’s annual Women in Sport awards. The World Trophy Award recognised, among other things, the development of a women coaches’ network and the profiling of successful women athletes as role models for girls.

### Blokes and sheep

When a New Zealand encyclopedia was published in 1984, it showed 156 photographs of men, including 15 of individual All Blacks (plus a group photo), 19 of sheep, and only 16 of women. By then, this ‘rugby, racing and beer’ approach was past its use-by date, but for decades it had been the public face of New Zealand popular culture.

In New Zealand women comprise 95% of netball players. Netball is the most popular team sport played by girls and women. The international success of the Silver Ferns national team, keen competition between semi-professional teams and high levels of participation by women in club netball have ensured significant commercial sponsorship and high levels of spectator and television interest. Involvement on the board of Netball New Zealand has been a route for some women into leadership in other sporting fields.

### Lower visibility

Sportswomen have been far less visible than sportsmen. When the numbers playing are taken into account, the space and time given to women’s sports in newspapers, radio and television has been far less than that given to men’s sport.

Over three decades, male New Zealand sports players received 80% of media coverage, females less than 10%. While the Black Ferns national women’s rugby team has been very successful internationally, they still have less status, lower funding and much less media attention than the male All Blacks team. A breakthrough in financial support for elite women rugby players occurred in March 2018, when New Zealand Rugby agreed to professional contracts of $40,000-45,000 per year for 30 of the best 15-a-side women rugby players. The amount they will receive is much lower than male national rugby players get; however, it is the outcome of effort over many years to address gender inequalities in New Zealand rugby.

Women cricket players also receive much less financial support and media attention than male players.

While women were initially seen as lacking the strength and endurance needed for athletic completion, by the late 20th century they were engaging in a full range of track and field events, including marathons.

**Extension Task:**  Once you have finished answering the questions – create a poster in your books on how New Zealand has improved over the years in giving more opportunities for women.