Women's Rights Through the Years

Sixteen cards, each naming a right and a country. Students guess the year, put the cards in order on a timeline, then answer the question on the card at their level. One deck, three ways to use it.

LEVEL	STUDENTS	GROUPING	TIME
A2 to C1	Teens and adults	Pairs or threes	10 to 30 minutes

Before class

1 Print
Pages 2 to 4, in colour or greyscale.

2 Cut
The 16 cards and the two halves of the timeline.

3 Tape
The timeline halves end to end.

4 Deal
One set of cards per group.

Three ways to use the cards

QUIZ

Guess the year

Read a card aloud. Pairs agree on a guess and write it down. The closest guess wins the card. Read the real year and one line from the notes.

5 min: four cards
15 min: all sixteen

TIMELINE

Put history in order

Groups lay all the cards above the timeline, oldest on the left. Reveal the years and let them move the cards. Ask which card surprised them most.

10 min: one group
15 min: groups compare lines

TALK

Conversation cards

Each student takes a card and answers the question at their level. Their partner asks one follow-up question before they swap.

5 min: one card each
15 min: three rounds, new partners

Language for the task

GUESSING

I'd guess around...
It must have been before...
It can't have been as late as...

REACTING

I'm surprised that...
I had no idea that...
That's later than I expected.

COMPARING

That was ... years before...
..., while in my country...
Both happened in the same decade.

Which errors to fix

FIX THESE, THEY ARE THE POINT

~~It must be in 1930.~~ → **It must have been in the 1930s.**

~~In 1918 women can vote in Poland.~~ → **In 1918 women could vote in Poland.**

LET THESE GO

"The women in Finland got vote." (article)

Stopping a student mid-opinion for an article costs the discussion more than the slip does.

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VOTE — NEW ZEALAND

Women can vote in national elections

YEAR **1893**

A2-B1 Do you always vote? Why or why not?

B2-C1 New Zealand was first, not a big country like Britain. Why might small countries change faster?

WORK & MONEY — FRANCE

A married woman can open a bank account without her husband's permission

YEAR **1965**

A2-B1 Should couples have one bank account or two?

B2-C1 Who should manage a family's money, and how should they decide?

POWER — SRI LANKA

A woman becomes prime minister, the first in the world

YEAR **1960**

A2-B1 Does it matter if your boss is a man or a woman?

B2-C1 Do women lead differently from men, or is that a stereotype?

VOTE — SWITZERLAND

Women can vote in federal elections

YEAR **1971**

A2-B1 Should men vote on women's rights? Why or why not?

B2-C1 Should rights ever be decided by a referendum? Which ones?

EVERYDAY LIFE — USA

Women can officially run the Boston Marathon

YEAR **1972**

A2-B1 Do men and women do the same sports in your country?

B2-C1 Should men and women ever compete against each other in sport?

VOTE — POLAND

Women can vote

YEAR **1918**

A2-B1 What age should people start voting: 16, 18 or 21?

B2-C1 Polish women won the vote weeks after independence. Why do rights often change after big events?

WORK & MONEY — SPAIN

A married woman no longer needs her husband's permission to get a job

YEAR **1975**

A2-B1 Imagine you needed permission to get a job. How would you feel?

B2-C1 Which right that we do not have now will people in 50 years find obvious?

VOTE — MEXICO

Women can vote in federal elections

YEAR **1953**

A2-B1 Would you like a woman as the next leader of your country? Why?

B2-C1 Mexico elected its first woman president in 2024. Why does that step take so much longer than the vote?

POWER — ITALY

Women can become judges

YEAR 1963

A2-B1 Which jobs did women not do when your grandparents were young?

B2-C1 Should courts have as many women judges as men? Why?

VOTE — FINLAND

Women can vote and stand for parliament

YEAR 1906

A2-B1 Would you like to be a politician? Why or why not?

B2-C1 Should parliaments keep a share of seats for women?

WORK & MONEY — UNITED KINGDOM

A law says women and men get equal pay for the same work

YEAR 1970

A2-B1 Do men and women get the same pay in your country?

B2-C1 Equal pay has been the law for decades, but a gap remains. Why?

VOTE — TURKEY

Women can vote in national elections

YEAR 1934

A2-B1 Do you know the name of a woman in your country's parliament?

B2-C1 Turkish women could vote ten years before French women. Does that surprise you? Why?

EVERYDAY LIFE — SAUDI ARABIA

Women can drive

YEAR 2018

A2-B1 Can you drive? Do you enjoy it?

B2-C1 What is harder to change: a law, or what people think?

VOTE — UNITED KINGDOM

Women can vote at 21, the same age as men

YEAR 1928

A2-B1 For years, British women had to be older than men to vote. Why do you think that was?

B2-C1 Is it ever fair to give some adults a vote and not others?

WORK & MONEY — WEST GERMANY

A wife can take a job without her husband's agreement

YEAR 1977

A2-B1 Who goes out to work in your family? Has it changed?

B2-C1 Can a law change how couples share the housework?

VOTE — BRAZIL

Women can vote

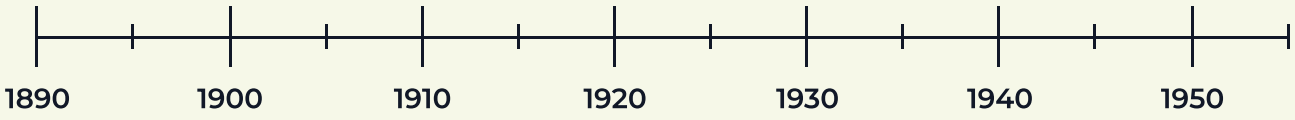
YEAR 1932

A2-B1 In Brazil, voting is compulsory. Is that a good idea?

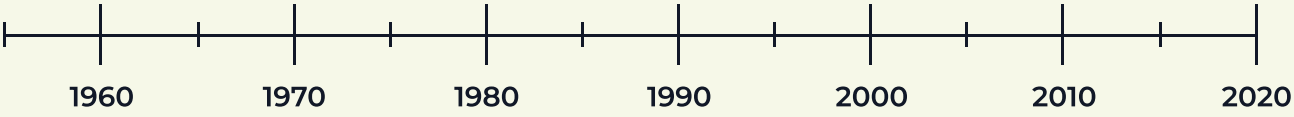
B2-C1 Should people who do not vote have to pay a fine?

Cut out the two halves and tape them end to end. Lay the cards above the line in the order you think is right, oldest on the left. Leave a gap where you are not sure.

1890 to 1955 TAPE HERE →



← TAPE HERE **1955 to 2020**



Add your own country

Fill in a right and a year for a country in your class. Check the year online, then place the card on the timeline with the others.

VOTE COUNTRY _____

Women can vote

YEAR _____

WHAT WE FOUND OUT

A2-B1 Is this earlier or later than you expected?

B2-C1 What was happening in the country that year?

YOUR CHOICE COUNTRY _____

Right _____

YEAR _____

WHAT WE FOUND OUT

A2-B1 Why did you choose this right?

B2-C1 Which right is still missing in this country?

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1893 **New Zealand** · Women can vote in national elections
The first self-governing country to give women the vote. Women could not stand for parliament until 1919.

1906 **Finland** · Women can vote and stand for parliament
The first country in Europe to give women the vote, and the first anywhere where women could both vote and stand. 19 women were elected in 1907.

1918 **Poland** · Women can vote
The decree was signed on 28 November 1918, about two weeks after Poland regained independence.

1928 **United Kingdom** · Women can vote at 21, the same age as men
From 1918 only women over 30 who met a property test could vote. The 1928 act made it 21, the same as men.

1932 **Brazil** · Women can vote
Part of the 1932 Electoral Code, signed on 24 February. Voting became compulsory for women, as for men, in 1965.

1934 **Turkey** · Women can vote in national elections
Granted on 5 December 1934. Women had voted in local elections since 1930. France followed in 1944.

1953 **Mexico** · Women can vote in federal elections
The constitution changed on 17 October 1953. Women first voted in a federal election in 1955.

1960 **Sri Lanka** · A woman becomes prime minister, the first in the world
Sirimavo Bandaranaike. The country was still called Ceylon and became Sri Lanka in 1972.

1963 **Italy** · Women can become judges
A law of 9 February 1963 opened the judiciary to women. The first eight women judges started work in 1965.

1965 **France** · A married woman can open a bank account without her husband's permission
Before the law of 13 July 1965, a wife needed her husband's consent to open an account or sign a work contract.

1970 **United Kingdom** · A law says women and men get equal pay for the same work
The Equal Pay Act was passed in May 1970 but only came into force in December 1975.

1971 **Switzerland** · Women can vote in federal elections
Men voted yes in a referendum on 7 February 1971. The last canton, Appenzell Innerrhoden, held out until a court ruling in 1990.

1972 **USA** · Women can officially run the Boston Marathon
Women ran without race numbers from 1966. 1972 was the first year they could officially enter.

1975 **Spain** · A married woman no longer needs her husband's permission to get a job
The permiso marital ended in May 1975. Before that, a wife needed her husband's permission to work, own property or travel.

1977 **West Germany** · A wife can take a job without her husband's agreement
The marriage law reform was passed in 1976 and came into force in 1977. Until then the law expected a wife to run the home.

2018 **Saudi Arabia** · Women can drive
The world's last ban on women driving ended on 24 June 2018.

Before the quiz

Ask for one guess for the whole deck: "When did women first vote anywhere?" Collect a few guesses before anyone sees New Zealand, 1893.

After the timeline

Point to Switzerland in 1971 and Saudi Arabia in 2018. Ask what a rich country and a recent date tell us about how rights change.

Law or daily life?

The UK equal pay law of 1970 came into force in 1975, and voting was optional for women in Brazil until 1965. Use these to push B2-C1 students on the difference.