

# Global Girl Leading Summit 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024

## Conference Training Materials

### Introduction

As part of the Mulberry Schools Trust's annual **Global Girl Leading** conference, we are pleased to offer a set of training materials designed to help you prepare for this important event. Held in celebration of the International Day of the Girl, this year's conference will take place on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster, with the event also streamed online for wider participation.

The theme of the conference focuses on how women lead change at local, national, and international levels, with an emphasis on the global challenges girls face and the collective action they can take to address them. Through these materials, you will have the opportunity to explore these issues in depth and reflect on how they can contribute to the conversation.

We've created these resources to ensure you arrive at the conference informed, engaged, and ready to participate. The materials are free to access on our website, providing essential background and guidance on the themes and discussions that will be at the heart of the event. Thank you for partnering with us to empower the next generation of female leaders. We look forward to your participation and the powerful contributions you will bring to the conference.

### Summit Purpose and Objectives

1. To empower girls with the knowledge, skills, experience, and capacity to deal constructively and powerfully with gender inequality and discrimination when they encounter it. Global Girl Leading supports girls' intellectual and personal development so that they can achieve self-determination, having the power of choice in their lives.
2. To build a global sisterhood of girls advocating for each other on the issues that affect them across the world. Girls will lead the change they want to see in context-responsive ways, with an ethos of mutuality and reciprocity at the heart.
3. To create an environment in which girls, educators and positive role models can engage with each other in discussion and debate, working towards positive and long-lasting social change.
4. To enable young people to develop their own leadership and advocacy skills through taking responsibility for the planning, delivery and follow up of the summit.

## Introduction to Global Girl Leading for student delegates

Global Girl Leading was launched in 2016, following a visit by Mrs Michelle Obama to Mulberry School for Girls. The goal of the project is to inspire and empower young women, helping them become future change-makers. This builds on more than 15 years of work by Mulberry, helping girls to build their leadership skills, grow their confidence and find their voices.

This year's conference takes place on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at the QEII conference centre in Westminster. Attendees will be drawn from schools across London and other parts of the UK, as well as international delegates from Kenya and Mexico. We will also welcome online attendees from partner schools around the globe including America, Australia, India and Malaysia!

Speakers at this year's conference include:

- Rachel Bagshaw, Artistic Director of the Unicorn Theatre
- Naarah Barnes, actor and musician, graduate of the Royal Academy of Music
- Dorothy Byrne, President of Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge
- Her Excellency Josefa González-Blanco Ortiz Mena, Mexican Ambassador to the UK
- Nusrath Hassan, Head of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the National Theatre
- Pinky Lilani, founder of the Women of the Future awards
- Dr Vanessa Ogden, CEO of Mulberry Schools Trust
- Ndidi Okezie, CEO of UK Youth
- Dame Rachel de Souza, the Children's Commissioner for England
- Caryl Stern, Chief Impact Officer at LionTree and former CEO of UNICEF USA
- Tina Tchen, Executive Vice President for the Obama Foundation and formerly Chief of Staff to Mrs Michelle Obama

The day will be divided into sections that focus on women's leadership at local, national, and international levels. The event will give you a chance to ask questions to all of our speakers, take part in group discussions, and enjoy live performances. You will be sitting with students from other schools at a table you are assigned in the morning.

- Each table will have a student leader from Mulberry Schools Trust to guide the discussion.
- Teachers will sit with you at your table and help support the discussions throughout the event. If any problems happen, please tell a member of the conference staff right away.
- Lunch will be provided, and all food will be halal.
- Mobile phones are not allowed during the event, except when used to interact with exhibitions during lunchtime.
- You must stay inside the building throughout the day. At least one teacher from each school will also stay in the building at all times.
- Remember to show respect to everyone, even if their views are different from yours. We expect all students to listen to other people's opinions, treat them with kindness and approach topics of discussion with sensitivity. Any form of harassment, discrimination or abuse will not be tolerated.

The materials which follow are designed to help ensure you can take a full part in discussion on the day and make the most out of your opportunity to interact with speakers and other delegates.

## Contents

Each section of this training pack focuses on one of six key areas. We would like you to explore each area before the conference, because they are all things that will be discussed during the event.

There may be some topics you have already studied in school, or read about in your own time, which you want to explore further. Some of them may be completely new to you. In either case, we hope that you will find it interesting to think about these topics as they are all things that affect girls around the world.

In each section, there are questions, to get you thinking, and also some links to further reading.

### Key focus 1: Educational inequality

- The UN Convention on the rights of the child
- The impact of puberty on girls' education
- The Sustainable Development Goals
- The Malala Fund

### Key focus 2: Economic inequality

- The global gender pay gap
- Micro-finance
- Women and investing
- A changing economy

### Key focus 3: Sports and the Arts

- Gender inequality in tennis
- Women's football
- Inequality at the Olympics
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- Women and art
- Gender inequality in theatre, film and TV

### Key focus 4: Women's leadership of political change

- The power of female leadership
- The UK's first gender-balanced government (almost)

### Key focus 5: Activism

- Women campaigning for political change
- Microfeminism
- Women campaigning about period poverty
- The Pink Bus service in Pakistan

### Key focus 6: Women's leadership of global change

- Michelle Obama
- Jacinda Ardern
- Malala Yousafzai

## Key focus 1: Educational inequality

### The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

#### Did you know that...?

In 1989, all countries in the world, except two, signed an international agreement called the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC). It has 54 statements about what rights children have everywhere in the world at all times. If your country signed the CRC, it is likely that it is also national law in your own country too.

The [CRC](#) says that all children have a right to education, girls and boys equally.

Every girl, everywhere can say:

#### “I have the right to an education”

- Governments should make sure children can get an education without it costing their family money.
- Schools should respect my dignity.
- Children should be able to stay in secondary education as long as they want.

#### “I have the right to an education which develops my personality, talents and abilities.”

- Education should develop children’s respect for other people’s human rights.
- Education should develop children’s respect for the environment.
- Children should learn about their own culture and other cultures.



**In reality, do all girls everywhere enjoy their right to education equally?**

**Why do you think the reality is so different from the aspiration, as expressed in international law?**

### The impact of puberty on girls’ education

The UN has recently started researching the [impact of menstruation \(periods\) on girls’ education](#). It has a **big impact globally and is thought to be one of the main reasons why girls drop out of secondary school.**

According to research from [UNICEF](#) and the [World Health Organisation](#), in 2024, there are major gaps in menstrual health and hygiene in schools.

Here are some of the key facts from these two reports.

- Worldwide, only 39% of schools teach about menstrual health. Menstrual health education is better in secondary schools than primary schools.
- Only 31% of schools globally have bins for menstrual waste in girls’ toilets.
- Menstrual products are not always available in schools and many students cannot afford to buy them.
- In many countries, adolescent schoolgirls do not have access to a clean toilet or other dedicated private space to change menstrual products in school.
- Unequal access to water and soap is an additional issue for millions of adolescent schoolgirls. Girls in urban areas, private schools and girls-only schools are more likely to have access to a private place with water and soap, highlighting inequalities even within the same country.
- Millions of girls around the world are unaware or unprepared for menstruation before having their first period. A study in one country found that less than half of the girls who took part in the survey knew about periods before their first time.

- Studies show that stigma related to menstruation is still common. Girls often feel ashamed or unable to openly discuss the topic. This shame can affect their mental health and school attendance.
- UNICEF and the WHO state that while many countries have made huge improvements in making menstrual products and services available in schools, more needs to be done.



**What is the impact of underinvestment in menstrual education and menstrual support in schools on girls' education?**

**Why do you think the UN have only recently started to report on this issue? Why is this a problem?**

**What can we, as a global community of women and girls, do to support girls who may be struggling with these issues?**

## The Sustainable Development Goals

The UN has set itself and its member countries some goals about education, including girls' education. These are the [2030 Sustainable Development Goals](#). The UN believes that in order to achieve one of its other Sustainable Development Goals – Gender Equality – education is key: 'Education helps to reduce inequalities and to reach gender equality'.

[UN Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) focuses on education and states that by 2030:

- All girls and boys should be able to access free state primary **and** secondary schooling
- All girls and boys should be able to access good quality vocational training (college or apprenticeships) and/or higher education (university).

The UN states that to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education, the following needs to happen:

- Government funding for education must become a national priority in every country
- Governments must make education free and compulsory for all children, girls and boys alike
- Governments must increase the number of qualified teachers working in schools
- Governments must improve basic school infrastructure, like classrooms and toilets
- Governments must improve access to and use of digital technology



**What else do you think governments need to do in order to ensure every girl, everywhere, can get a high-quality education, including college / an apprenticeship / university?**

**If Sustainable Goal 4 is achieved in relation to girls' education, how do you think the world might be different in 2060? Why?**

## The Malala Fund

[The Malala Fund](#), an international charity established by Malala Yousafzai, compares countries around the world, scoring their support for girls' education.

The Malala Fund researches the quality of girls' education in low- or middle-income countries. They focus on these countries as these governments have less money to spend on public services. As a result, girls' education may suffer.

The Malala Fund also researches the support that high-income countries give to low- and middle-income countries, specifically to support girls' education. These are called 'donor countries' on the report card.

Each country is scored out of 100 for a range of measures. The top three measures are:

- **SDG** = Sustainable Development Goals
- **Policy Score** = Government policies to support girls' education, this could include things like free state secondary school for girls

→ **Avg. Score** = overall how each country scores across all of the measures... There are 13 measures in total!

You can read the full '[Report Card](#)' for your country online.



**How does your home country score on the report card?**

**What are the strengths of girls' education in your country?**

**What are the weaknesses of girls' education in your country?**

**What 3 things would you like to improve about girls' education in your country? Why?**

## Key focus 2: Economic inequality

### The global gender pay gap

According to UN Women, “[worldwide, women are paid only \\$0.77 for every \\$1 men are paid](#)”.

- Women tend to work in certain types of jobs – these jobs are usually lower paid jobs.
- Society values ‘women’s work’ less, and women are paid less for their work.
- 3 types of women are the paid the least: “women of colour, immigrant women and mothers”.
- For mothers, this is called the “motherhood penalty” – society still expects mothers to care for children which pushes them to do jobs which are less secure and pay less, including part-time work.
- As a result, when women retire, more elderly women live in poverty than elderly men.

In the UK, women are not paid equally to men. In 2023, the Fawcett Society, a feminist campaign group found out that:

- on average, working women are paid £574 less than men each month (that’s £6,888 a year less than men)
- at the current rate of change, the ‘gender pay gap’ will not close until 2051—that’s 27 years from 2024!
- women aged 40 and older (those born before 1983) will never be paid the same as men. They will retire before the ‘gender pay gap’ closes.



**How old will you be in 2051?**

**Are you willing to wait until then to be paid the same as men for the same work?**

**What do you think women can do to close the ‘gender pay gap’ faster?**

**What do you think men can do to close the ‘gender pay gap’ faster?**

### Micro-finance

**Micro-finance is a way to save small amounts of money and get a small loan when you need it. The money is managed by the local community for the people who live in the community.**

Some facts about microfinance:

- Microfinance loans help 20 million people around the world who are living in poverty, by lending them money when they need it. These loans allow them to borrow small amounts of money to help them buy items when they need them. For example, a loan to buy materials to start a new business.
- Microfinance savings help millions of people to save money safely and securely. These savings allow them to build up small amounts of money to buy larger items when they need them. For instance, saving to buy equipment to start a new business.
- Microfinance helps women and their families more than traditional banking. Women tend to use microfinance money to change the lives of their children as well as their own, i.e., paying for their healthcare or education.
- Helping some women through microfinance also helps other women. When poorer women start microbusinesses and become successful, they tend to help others in the community too. Plus, these successful microbusiness women have more of a say in how the community is run, and make more decisions for the benefit of everyone in the community.

The [Grameen Bank](#) is the world’s largest microfinance organisation. It was started in a small village in Bangladesh in 1976 to support local people to help themselves to rise out of poverty.

- Today it has 11 billion customers, 23,000 employees, and 3,000 branches globally.
- More than more than 90% of loan clients are women! (One reason that the bank has become so successful is that women tend to be more reliable when paying their loan repayments than men!)



Imagine you are setting up a new micro-business...

- > what would it be?
- > what would you need to get started?
- > where would you get the money to help you get started?



Now, imagine that your microbusiness is successful, and you want to expand...

- > how will you expand your business?
- > where would you get the money to help you expand?
- > how will you give back to your community?

## Women and investing

Investing is the "the most powerful wealth-building tool in the world". But what is investing? And how much do women invest? Do women invest well?

There is a 'gender wealth gap' – men are wealthier than women.

- ➔ Men are paid more than women for the same work. Also, 'traditionally female jobs' like nursing are paid less than 'traditionally male jobs' like being a doctor. So, men have more money than women from their jobs
- ➔ Men are trained better in money management than women, and men invest more than women. So, men have more money than women from their investments.

77% of millennial women lack financial confidence and only 46% of women pass a basic financial literacy test.

Wise money management includes activities like:

- ➔ making a personal budget and sticking to it
- ➔ managing and reducing your debt (credit cards/loans/Klarna)
- ➔ investing in housing by buying your home (usually through taking out a mortgage), rather than renting.

Investing includes activities like:

- ➔ buying shares in a company on the stock market. The value of the shares increases over time. When you sell your shares, you make a profit.
- ➔ buying and selling foreign currency on the stock market. The value of \$ and £ and other currencies changes over time. Investors can buy \$100 one day and the next day they \$100 is worth \$110. They make a profit when they sell the \$.
- ➔ saving money for retirement. If you save £200 a month every month for 40 years, how much money will you have to help you when you retire? What could you do with this money in retirement?
- ➔ paying into a pension for retirement. When you earn a salary from your job, you and your employer pay a tax to the government. When you retire, the government uses this tax to pay you a pension. (You can also choose to pay money into your own private pension each month. This will help you pay for things when you retire.)

[Your Juno](#) is a new app for women to teach them about money management and investing. Juno are trying to close the 'gender wealth gap' by supporting women to use money more wisely and invest to make more money for their future. You can do short lessons on the app, read guides to manage your money more wisely, watch inspirational videos from wealthy women etc.



## A changing economy

Around the world, changes in the economy are leading to shifting expectations about gender in the workplace. In Australia, for example, larger numbers of young women are taking jobs in the ‘traditionally male’ mining industry and earning huge salaries.

Working in mines is tough, grimy, lonely work, often undertaken in temperatures well over 40 degrees Centigrade. Mining in Australia’s outback is no different – it is hard work. To go to work, miners have to take a flight from Perth to the iron ore and copper mines in the Pilbara region, which is two hours north. They have to spend time away from their families. But it is also well-paid work, with additional benefits. Australian miners [can earn AU\\$100,000 a year](#).

Traditionally, this work has been done by men. However, in Australia, more and more women are now applying for and doing mining jobs. A new group of female “Generation Z miners” have used social media, especially TikTok, to show young women how fantastic the salaries and other job benefits can be in mining. (For example, after working at the mines for several weeks, miners then fly home to have several weeks of holiday.)

This has encouraged more and more women to apply to do this traditionally male work. One of the impacts of this is to change gender stereotypes about what work women and men can do, and contributing to reducing the gender pay gap for women in Australia.



**What ‘traditionally male’ jobs have you noticed more and more women doing in your country? What impact does that have on girls (and boys) in school today?**

**Is the same also true for men? Are more and more men doing ‘traditionally female’ jobs? Why is that? What is the impact of this on girls (and boys) in school today?**

## Key focus 3: Sports and the Arts

### Gender inequality in tennis

Until the 1970s, the prize money for women's tennis competitions was much less than the prize money for men's tennis competitions. [Billie Jean King](#), an American female tennis player, became a campaigner for equal prize money for women's tennis players.

- ➔ When King won the U.S. Tennis Open Championship in 1972, she received \$15,000 less than the male champion. She said that if the prize money was not equal the following year, she wouldn't play.
- ➔ Billie Jean King persuaded her fellow players to form the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) in 1973. The WTA started their own competitions, separate to the men's competitions.

Slowly, over time things changed...

- ➔ In 1973, the U.S. Open Championship became the first major tennis competition to offer equal prizes to the male and female players.
- ➔ Also in 1973, Billie Jean King played one of the most famous tennis matches in history, watch by 90 million people live on television! She played a tennis match against Bobby Riggs, an ex-professional, male tennis player and sexist - Bobby said that men's tennis was better than women's tennis. King beat Bobby in the match.
- ➔ This tennis match was called "The Battle of the Sexes". It is now a Hollywood film starring Emma Stone and Steve Carrell.

Wimbledon is the UK's most famous tennis competition. Until 2023, it had a strict all-white rule for tennis players' clothing. This made many female tennis players worry about playing matches at Wimbledon during their periods.

- ➔ Some female players even asked their support team to help them: their support team sat in the crowd and watched their player closely. The support team gave the female tennis player a signal if they could see menstrual blood through their players' white clothing.
- ➔ Other players decided to take the contraceptive pill to stop them from having a period during Wimbledon's two-week long competition, even though they did not want to.

[Wimbledon changed their all-white clothing rules in 2023](#). The year before, tennis fans protested at Wimbledon about the all-white rule for women tennis players, and asked Wimbledon to change the rules.

Now, female players are allowed to wear "solid, mid/dark-coloured undershorts, provided they are no longer than their shorts or skirt." So, although they achieved some progress, women's clothing is still controlled and regulated – there is more work to be done!

### Women's football

In 2023, England's women's football team played in the World Cup. Nike had the contract to make football shirts for fans. Nike made fans' shirts of all the England football players except the women's goalkeeper – Mary Earps.

- ➔ Nike said that producing the fans' shirt of the women's goalkeeper shirt was not 'good business': they would not sell enough to make a profit. (Even though they made a fans' shirt for the England men's goalkeeper!)

Mary Earps and her fans were upset and angry about this. Earps was very popular with England football fans:

- ➔ She played for the England team that won the European Championship in 2022.
- ➔ She was named the world's top goalkeeper in 2022 by [FIFA](#).
- ➔ Her fans' goalkeeper shirt for Manchester United, (her professional team) sold out in 2022

After a campaign by fans, Nike agreed to make Mary Earps's goalkeeper shirt for fans.

- ➔ The first shirts sold out in hours, so Nike had to make more.
- ➔ The second shirts sold out in minutes.

- Later that year, Earps won a very famous UK award for Sport, voted by the public, [BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2023](#)



- Why do you think Nike initially decided against making the England women's goalkeeper shirt?
- Why did Nike eventually give in to fans' protests and make Mary Earps's shirt?
- What other examples of inequality in sports have you noticed?
- What could fans do about these other examples of inequality in sports?

### Inequality at the Olympics

For the first time in history, [there were an equal number of men and women competing in this year's Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games](#). This 50:50 representation of women and men makes the Paris Olympics 2024 the first Olympics to achieve gender equality. Plus, the Paris Olympics had more women's and mixed gender events, which offered more opportunities for women to win medals.

This year's Olympics were organised so that TV companies could show more women's events. This means that 3 billion sports' fans around the world could watch more women's Olympic sports live for the first time.

However, sexist attitudes to women still exist in Olympic sport. The media still pay more attention to men's sports. Equality Now, a feminist campaigning charity, challenged TV viewers to spot the sexism with their [Representation Bingo Card](#).

- Women and men are portrayed differently in the media.
- Women are often 'sexualized' with much more attention given to their appearances.
- Women's personal lives are often discussed in the Media rather than their sporting abilities.



- Does it surprise you to know that this summer's Olympics and Paralympic Games were the first to have 50:50 representation of women and men?
- Do you notice anything interesting on the Representation Bingo Card?
- What more do you think could be done about this issue?

### Gender inequality in the media industry

There is significant gender inequality in the media industry, despite some signs that things are getting better.

On average, the difference between what women and men are paid in UK media organisations is 11% (women are paid 11% less than men).

The number of women in the highest paid, and most important, jobs in media companies is increasing. In 2023, 76% of the 34 largest media companies increased the number of women in top jobs.

Two media companies have 50% men and women in their top jobs: STV Television (Scottish TV) and Newsquest Community Media (local newspapers across England).

But, women and men are still not equal in the media industry. Some of the largest media companies are far from being gender equal.

- At The Sun newspaper (read by 1 million people a day) and the Daily Mirror newspaper fewer than 30% of their top jobs are being done by women.

- In annual bonuses (extra pay for working extra well), men received more bonus pay than women at almost 65% of media companies.
- Only one media company actually pays women more than men - Newsquest paid women 68% more than men on average.



**Why do you think there are so few women working in the media, especially in senior jobs?**

**What do you think is the wider the impact of having so few women working in senior jobs at the UK's most-read daily newspaper (The Sun)?**

### Women and art

When it comes to the world of art, women have been discriminated against for centuries.

Women are still being discriminated against today... "As artist and professor Joan Semmel put it: '...if there are no great celebrated women artists, that's because the powers that be have not been celebrating them, but not because they are not there.'"

According to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, 51% of artists in the UK today are women, but their work is displayed in fewer galleries and exhibitions than men's art. For example, in London, 78% of art galleries and exhibitions display more male artists' work than female artists' work. Only 5% of galleries and exhibitions show an equal amount of male and female artists' work.

In 2017, the Tate – one of the UK's largest and most famous art galleries – only 27% of the living artists in the Tate's collection were women. [The Tate decided to do something about this](#). Since then, the Tate has specifically bought art works of living female artists to add to their collection. Recently, the Tate has started a project to search for "women doing challenging and innovative work and those who were neglected by history, and to work towards greater representation of diverse, non-European women in collections and galleries".



**Why is equal representation in art important for women?**

**What else do you think the Tate, and other galleries, could do to support women artists?**

### Gender inequality in theatre, film and TV

There have long been concerns about the under-representation of women in the world of theatre, film and television, and there has been little improvement in gender equality in the creative arts in recent years.

Some of the biggest issues for women in the theatre are:

- the unfair share of caring responsibilities in families – 8/10 female performers are forced to refuse work due to parenting or caring responsibilities
- to the lack of female leadership in theatre, and imbalances in film... Only 16% of working film-makers are female, and only 14% of prime-time TV shows are written by women.

As with many areas of life, [the Covid-19 pandemic made gender inequality in the UK arts industry worse](#).

None of the senior leaders from UK theatre on the [Cultural Renewal Taskforce](#) were women – this is a group set up by the UK Government to investigate how to support UK theatres to recover after the pandemic.

When a group of expert women wrote to the UK Government to ask for a meeting about this, the UK Government did not reply.



**Why do you think it is important that women are involved in decision-making at a senior level in film, TV and theatre?**

**What more do you think could be done to increase gender equality in this industry?**

## Key focus 4: Women's leadership of political change

### The power of female leadership

Did you know that female-led countries perform better than male-led countries?

Research shows that countries with more women in leadership jobs are [more economically successfully](#) than those countries with fewer women in leadership roles.

- Research shows that [women-led countries are good for the planet](#)—countries with more women in top leadership jobs have stricter national policies on climate. Plus, these countries are more likely to agree to, and sign into law, international climate treaties.
- There is also [evidence](#) that companies with female leaders perform better than those which are male-dominated.
- Additionally, citizens think that women-led countries are governed better than men-led countries.
- [A survey of 17,000 citizens around the world](#) has found that 70 percent of people believe countries led by women are better managed.

In 2024, there could be an important moment in politics for women...

-> Half of the world's population will be affected by [elections in 70 countries in 2024](#).

-> In May 2024, Mexico elected the country's first female President, Claudia Sheinbaum.

-> In November 2024, the US may elect Kamala Harris, she would be the USA's first female President.

But, that there are only 27 countries (out of nearly 200 countries) where women are the President or Prime Minister.



**Why aren't women in charge in more countries around the world?**

**How might the world be different if women were in charge in more countries in the world?**

### The UK's first gender-balanced government (almost!)

For the first time in UK political history, the UK Cabinet\* and the UK House of Commons are (almost) gender equal.

In July 2024, the UK had a General Election to elect Members of Parliament (MPs) to represent all 650 constituencies (local communities) in the UK. 41% of the newly elected MPs were women. This is the highest number of women MPs in UK history.

The Labour Party won the UK General Election in July 2024, winning the most MPs. Their leader, Keir Starmer became the new UK Prime Minister. When choosing Labour MPs to be Ministers, Keir Starmer chose women to do 12 out of 25 ministerial jobs in the cabinet (48%). That is the highest number of female Cabinet Ministers in UK history.

Keir Starmer also chose a female MP to become the UK's first women Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister). Rachel Reeves is the first female Chancellor since the job was created in 1221.

Only 3 out of 58 of the UK's Prime Ministers have been women since the job was created in 1721. That's an average of 1 female Prime Minister every 100 years!

- **Margaret Thatcher, UK PM (1979-1990)** who did not promote any female MPs into her UK Cabinet. (She promoted one female member of the House of Lords)
- **Theresa May, UK PM (2016-2019)** who worked hard to bring more women into politics, and introduced a law to force large companies to measure and report on equal pay and gender equality
- **Liz Truss, UK PM (49 days in 2022)** the UK's shortest-serving Prime Minister.



Why is it important to have more female MPs and Cabinet Ministers?

What impact do you think this (almost) gender equal UK Cabinet and House of Commons will have on UK politics?

## Key focus 5: Activism

### Women campaigning for political change

Politics is not just about politicians, it is also about the people: ordinary citizens who campaign for positive political change.

Have you heard of this female campaigner: [Gina Martin](#)?

She started a campaign to write a new law in England and Wales to ban “upskirting”.

Upskirting is when someone takes a photograph up a women’s skirt without her permission.

- ➔ In the summer of 2017, a man “upskirted” Gina at an outdoor music concert in London. She called Security. Security called the police. The police asked the man to delete the photo and then closed the case 3 days later.
- ➔ The man was not arrested, nor prosecuted. The police said that they could arrest, nor prosecute the man under existing laws.
- ➔ Gina was so shocked and angry, that she started a campaign to change the law.

Every day for 1 year she got up at 4am and worked on her campaign before she went to work.

- ➔ She asked UK Parliament to make upskirting a specific crime.
- ➔ She asked ordinary people, celebrities, politicians and women all over the UK to support her campaign.
- ➔ It was not easy... the first time a draft law was debated and voted on in the House of Commons, one male MP campaigned against it and the proposed law failed to win the vote.
- ➔ But, UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, decided to support Gina’s campaign, and with her support, upskirting was made a crime in English and Welsh law.

Gina Martin says,

*“Democracy and changing things isn’t just for people in power — the few — it’s for everybody. [...] Micro-activism is something we do every day. [...] It’s something everyone can do — and that’s the most important thing. [...]*

*I’m not defining myself as this is all I do, it’s just this is part of my life: trying to make the world a better place, because that’s what we should all be doing if we have the opportunity to do that.”*

### Microfeminism

Did you know that microfeminism is changing the world, one small act at a time!

Ashley Chaney is a producer in Los Angeles, USA, she is an active microfeminist. In March 2024, she [posted a video on Tik Tok](#) explaining her microfeminism, it has been viewed over 2, 500, 000 times and more than 6,000 feminists have added their comments about their acts of microfeminism.

Ashley did not invent microfeminism, but she is an active advocate for it, and was recently [interviewed in Glamour Magazine](#) about it.

Ashley explains what she means by microfeminism:

- ➔ When emailing a group of people, and writing their names, she writes the women’s names first... “Dear Kathy and Joe, ...” because most people write the men’s names first!
- ➔ When emailing a male CEO and his female assistant, to set up a meeting, she writes both their names in the “To” box. Most people write “To” the CEO, and “CC” the female assistant even though the female assistant will be the person who organises the meeting.



Other women have posted their examples too...

- “At the preschool I work at, I always call the **dads** first when kids are sick and the  **moms** for billing\* questions,” (\*billing = invoicing for the cost pre-school)
- “If someone tells me they saw their doctor / specialist / lawyer / other smart person type role, I ask ‘what did **she** say?’”
- “I made my mortgage lender [bank] re-do our documents to **list me first**. They said it didn’t matter. I [said] good, then it’s an easy change!”

[Professor Lenore Blum](#), who helped found the Association for Women in Mathematics, explains that this form of microfeminism is important as it points out and corrects the daily “subtle biases and microaggressions” against women. Doing small feminist acts like Ashley Chaney’s and others’ are “intentional, meaningful and significant”. So, is it really microfeminism, or is it really “big, bold, important, change-making stance-taking” feminism?



**What other examples of ‘subtle sexism and microaggressions’ against women have you seen or experienced?**

**What other acts of microfeminism can we add to the list on Ashely Caney’s Tik Tok video comments?**

**Which acts of microfeminism could you take?**

### Women campaigning about period poverty

Politics is not just about politicians, it is also about the people: ordinary citizens who campaign for positive political change.

Have you heard of this female campaigner: Alvina Appleton?

- She started a charity in 2023 to give free period products to women in need.
- The charity, Flow Happy, gives out free period products in libraries and community centres in 13 areas in London. (The charity also offers women wellbeing classes and educational workshops.)  
-> Since Flow Happy started, the charity has given away over 200,000 period products.

Have you heard of this female campaigner: Gabby Jahanshahi-Edlin?

- She started a charity in 2016 called Bloody Good Period. Gabby found out that very few food banks and help centres for asylum seeker were giving out free period products.  
-> She started a campaign on Facebook, asking people on to donate period products to help women in need.
- The campaign became a UK-wide charity.

Both [Flow Happy](#) and [Bloody Good Period](#) have campaigned for free period products to be available in schools for girls in need.

In 2020, the UK government started to provide free period products for primary schools and secondary schools in England. Since then, 99% of secondary schools, 94% of 16-19 organisations and 75% of primary schools have placed orders for free period products.

[The UK government support was set to end in July 2024](#), but campaigners like Alvina and Gabby persuaded the UK government to continue the scheme until the end of 2025.

## The Pink Bus service in Pakistan

**In Karachi, Pakistan there are women only buses so women can safely travel around the city.**

In Karachi, Pakistan, route 10 is the “[Pink Bus](#)”, a bus service for women passengers only. It started in 2023, and has 5 different routes across the city.

The city government is paying for the bus, and it has cost the city, 12 billion Pakistani rupees (roughly US\$43,000). “It started with three routes and 18 buses, each painted a bright, Barbie pink. In April of this year, it added another two routes and 10 more buses.” The Pink Buses run from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

[Women in Karachi desperately need this service](#) because of the extent of the problems which women face on public transport in the city:

- “85% of working women, 82% of students and 67% of homemakers had felt harassed at least once in the previous year while commuting on Karachi public transport.
- The perpetrators were found to be fellow passengers (75%), conductors (20%), and sometimes even the bus driver (5%).”

[The idea for the Pink Buses](#) was originally that of a male politician (Sharjeel Memon, Minister for Transport in the Sindh region), but the programme is run by gender specialist and research analyst Huma Ashar (a woman).

“Having a woman in this role is important, notes [Marium Naveed](#), whose work focuses on urban public spaces and public transportation. “When women are at the table where these decisions are being taken, that’s where you really ensure that top to bottom, you’ve thought this through,” she says.

However, the Pink Buses are not without their problems...

- Ishrat Jabeen, a gender specialist for Pakistan at the Asian Development Bank, worries that the bus services are not designed with women’s specific needs in mind, i.e., bus routes near schools, safe bus stops at which to wait, or offering other options alongside the bus.
- Also, there is very little information online about the bus and services do not run-on time - sometimes the Pink Bus doesn’t come for 3 hours.
- Plus, all the bus drivers are still men. New women bus drivers are being trained and will start driving the buses in 2025.



**What do you think about this women-only public service? Is it a good use to taxpayers’ money? Why?**

**Would a women-only bus be a good idea in your community? Why? Why not?**

**What other women-only public services does your community need? Why?**

## Key focus 6: Women's leadership of global change

### Michelle Obama: American icon and global champion of girls' education

Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama is a writer, lawyer, campaigner and activist. She was the [first African-American First Lady of the USA](#), as the wife of Barack Obama, the first black President of the USA.

Mrs Obama was born on the south side of Chicago, USA. A traditionally working-class area. Her father worked for the Chicago Water Department, he did a manual job, operating water pumps. Mrs Obama's mother worked as a secretary for a large shop, and later was a full-time mother and housewife. Mrs Obama and her brother, Craig, did not have a bedroom, and slept in the living room. (A bed sheet was used as a curtain between their two sides of the room.) Her father suffered from a disease called multiple sclerosis. As her father became more ill, he had to walk with walking sticks. He worked hard to save money to pay for Mrs Obama to go to university.



Mrs Obama went to government schools in Chicago. (Some of her teachers warned her against applying to Princeton University as they thought she would not win a place.) She applied anyway – her older brother went there, and she wanted to go to! She won a place to study Sociology and African-American studies at Princeton. Later she studied law at Harvard University. (Princeton and Harvard are two of most expensive and elite universities in the USA). After university she moved back to Chicago to work for a law firm. (She met her husband, Barack Obama at the law firm.)

Mrs Obama left the law firm to work for the Chicago local government – planning and developing the city of Chicago. After this, she jointly founded a charity to help young people volunteer in the local community, and become youth leaders in their communities. She left to work for the University of Chicago leading their services for students and the health centre for students. (Whilst working for the University of Chicago, Mrs Obama had two daughters, Malia and Sasha.)

During her time as the USA's First Lady, she led 4 programmes to improve the lives of Americans: support to encourage families and children to eat more healthily and exercise more; support to encourage more young people to go to college or university after high school; support for ex-military workers and their families, once they leave the military; education for teenage girls globally.

Mrs Obama is known as a campaigner for positive change, and encourages women to go into politics. In one of her final speeches as first lady she said, "I wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves, and I watch my daughters, two beautiful, intelligent, Black young women, playing with their dogs on the White House lawn," she said. "And because of Hillary Clinton (candidate for US President in 2008), my daughters, and all our sons and daughters, now take for granted that a woman can be president of the United States."

Today, Mrs Obama is an award-winning author, documentary-maker, campaigner and activist. Together with Barack, she runs the Obama Foundation a charity that supports young people from different backgrounds to become successful in their lives, careers and as leaders in their communities.

## Jacinda Ardern, former Prime Minister of New Zealand

Jacinda Ardern is a [politician from New Zealand](#), ex-leader of the New Zealand Labour Party, and the youngest Prime Minister of New Zealand in 150 years.

She is also only the second ever Head of State in any country around the world to give birth whilst in office. She resigned as Prime Minister in 2023, saying that being Prime Minister was not good for her health and wellbeing.

Ardern grew up in a small, rural town in New Zealand, with high rates of poverty amongst Māori families (indigenous New Zealanders). This social injustice affected her deeply and she went on to campaign for better support for minorities in New Zealand. Her family were Mormons, a group of Christian with strict beliefs. Her father was a police officer, who moved the family across the country with his job. Ardern went to government schools, and then studied Communication Studies in Public Relations and Political Science at Waikato University, in New Zealand.



Whilst at university, Ardern she joined New Zealand's Labour Party, and went to work for the party after graduating. She worked for Helen Clarke, the second female Prime Minister of New Zealand, and her Labour Party government. She moved to the UK and worked for Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his UK Labour Party government.

When Ardern returned to New Zealand, she put herself forward as a Labour candidate in the New Zealand General Election. She lost the vote in her local constituency by 13,000 votes but won the vote in the larger region. She became the youngest ever member of the House of Representatives at age 28.

She left the Mormon religion as a result of their beliefs about homosexuality and gay marriage. Slowly she became more famous in New Zealand, and the Media commented more and more on her personal life, her hobbies (she was a DJ) and her appearance (she called herself a 'positive nerd').

In 2017, Ardern became leader of the Labour Party and, after the General Election, became Prime Minister. She was very popular with young people and women, and promised to introduce 'free university education', 'reduce immigration', 'stop abortion being a crime', reduce poverty amongst children, and support minority groups better. She also became a feminist icon after she challenged journalists over their questions about when she was going to have children. In 2018, she had a daughter, and became the first leader of a country in nearly 30 years to give birth while in office.

In 2019, she led New Zealand through the aftermath of a terrorist attack on a mosque in Christchurch, one of New Zealand's largest cities. (50 people were murdered and another 50 people were injured.) The same year, she led the country through the aftermath of volcanic explosion on a remote island which killed 22 people.

In 2020, Ardern and her government made tough decisions about how to protect New Zealand from Covid-19. They stopped foreign visitors from coming to New Zealand in March 2020, and enforced a strict lockdown on the people of New Zealand. New Zealand's economy suffered from the lack of tourists, but Ardern's tough decisions meant that New Zealand stopped Covid-19 from spreading. She announced a second hard lockdown when more people became infected. By October 2020, only 2,000 people had caught Covid-19 across the whole country, and only 25 people died.

Over the next 2 years, Ardern's policies became more unpopular: hard lockdowns, compulsory vaccination, gun control, poor response to the increase in cost of living, falling value of housing. Protests against her increased. Conspiracy theories against her grew online. The number of threats against her life multiplied: 'according to police, there were 18 threats against her life in 2019, 32 in 2020 and 50 in 2021'. This had a huge negative impact on Ardern, and in January 2023 resigned her job as Prime Minister, saying that

*"I believe that leading a country is the most privileged job anyone could ever have, but also one of the more challenging. You cannot, and should not do it unless you have a full tank...I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple."*

Since then, Ardern has joined Harvard University as a fellow (lecturer and researcher) in public leadership (political leadership). She is specialising in helping students and staff to build leadership skills, and studying ways to improve combating extremist content posted online.

**Malala Yousafzai, campaigner for girls' education and youngest ever Nobel Peace Prize winner**

[Malala was born in Pakistan, in Mingora, in 1997.](#) Her father was determined that as Malala grew up, she would have the same opportunities as a boy. Her father was a teacher and ran a girls' school in their village – Malala was a student there.

In 2008, things changed in the Swat Valley where Malala lived with her family. The Taliban, a group of extremists, took control of the valley and banned girls from going to school. (They also banned other things like playing music and watching TV. They destroyed over 150 schools. They banned women from going to the market and shopping.) Aged 11, Malala had to stop going to school openly, and start going to school in secret.



In 2009, she began writing an anonymous diary in Urdu for the BBC online. She wrote about being a girl in Mingora, living under Taliban control, and the restrictions on girls' education. Here is an example from her blog:

*Do not wear colourful dresses - 5 January 2009*

*"I was getting ready for school and about to wear my uniform when I remembered that our principal had told us not to wear uniforms and come to school wearing normal clothes instead.*

*"So, I decided to wear my favourite pink dress. Other girls in school were also wearing colourful dresses. During the morning assembly we were told not to wear colourful clothes as the Taliban would object to it."*

As the Pakistani government tried to clear the Swat Valley of the Taliban, Malala and her family went into exile. In a documentary about her in 2009, Malala complained that "I'm really bored because I have no books to read [in exile]". Later than year, she and her family moved back to Mingora – the Pakistani government had successfully cleared the Taliban from the area.

Malala started to talk on TV shows about girls' education. [She became a high-profile campaigner for girls' education](#), and was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize by The Kids Rights Foundation in 2011.

In 2012, Malala spoke out against the Taliban and for girls going to school. This made her very unpopular with the Taliban, and they started to search for her. In October 2012, a Taliban gunman shot Malala in the head on her way home from school. She was brought to the UK to have surgery to save her life.

Malala had many surgeries and rehabilitation over the next 2 years of her life, and in 2014 decided to stay in the UK permanently. Her family joined her in the UK from Pakistan. The same year, Malala and her father started a charity, called the Malala Fund to support girls' education around the world. As a result of her campaigning and charity work, she was awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) in 2014 – she was the youngest ever winner!

In 2018, alongside her work at the Malala Fund, she started a degree at Oxford University, one of the most elite universities in the UK. In 2020 she graduated from Oxford University. She continues to lead the Malala Fund to support girls everywhere to get 12 years of free high-quality education.