

What helped the struggle for equal rights in Britain after 1960?

8.8A

A



In photograph A, a police officer is proposing to his boyfriend in front of the crowds at the London Pride event in 2016. Such an event would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier. For much of the twentieth century, homosexual activity was illegal. Just 50 years earlier, simply being in a same-sex relationship could have put both men in prison.

This is just one example of how Britain has become a more equal society over the past decades. Since the 1960s, groups who might have been ignored or discriminated against in the past have achieved great progress towards equal rights. And the changes have happened much more quickly in recent years.

Enquiry

How and why this positive change towards equal rights has happened is the subject of this enquiry. The changes did not happen by accident. They were the result of years of struggle by campaigners as well as wider changes taking place in British society.

You are going to examine the struggle for equal rights of four groups:

- a** women
- b** people from black and minority ethnic communities
- c** gay people
- d** disabled people.

Your challenge is to choose one group and to write an explanation of:

- how things changed
- why things changed for the group.

Step 1: The main changes

Use the summary panels on the opposite page to record specific examples of change for your group. Note when that change happened.

1960 to the present – an overview

Women

For much of history, women in Britain were treated as second-class citizens. They could not vote and were excluded from many types of job. Through the twentieth century, this changed. For example:

- **1960s** Reliable contraception became available to women.
- **1972** Equal Pay Act made it illegal for women to be paid less than men for the same work.
- **1975** Sex Discrimination Act made it unlawful to discriminate against women in work, education and training.
- **1979** Britain got its first female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

However, women are still not treated as equals. For example:

- Women in 2016 still earned 10 per cent less than men for equivalent work.
- 23 per cent of women between the ages of 16 and 30 say they have been sexually harassed at work.

Black and minority ethnic groups (BAME)

Britain has always had an ethnically mixed population. But, after 1945, the ethnic mix changed quickly as workers came from the West Indies, India and Pakistan to help rebuild post-war Britain.

Many black immigrants faced prejudice from some white communities when finding a place to live or getting a job. Their very presence was treated as a problem by some politicians such as Enoch Powell.

From the 1970s, this changed:

- **1976** Race Relations Act made it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of race in employment and education.
- **1981** Scarman Report tried to change the way the police dealt with black suspects and offenders.
- **1991** Macpherson Report tried to tackle racism (in the police force).

However, despite these changes, BAME communities still experience racism. In 2013–14, there were 47,571 racist incidents recorded by police in England and Wales.

Gay people

For hundreds of years in Britain, it was illegal to have homosexual relations. No one could stop people being gay, they just were not allowed to show it for fear of imprisonment.

- **1967** Sexual Relations Act legalised gay sex for people over 21. Gay people could now be more open about their sexuality, but they still struggled to be accepted as equals.

- **1972** The first London Pride festival was held to promote gay rights and encourage gay people to be proud of their sexuality.

- **2000** People identifying as gay were able to serve in the armed forces for the first time. The age of sexual consent for same sex couples was made the same as for a man and a woman.

- **2014** Gay people were allowed to marry.

However, many gay people still report being bullied because of their sexuality.

Disabled people

In the nineteenth century, it was common to shut disabled people away in institutions.

The two world wars of the twentieth century injured millions of soldiers. The plight of disabled veterans helped to change attitudes.

- **1970** Disabled Persons Act recognised the rights of people with disabilities.
- **1981** Education Act stated that disabled children were to be included, where possible, into mainstream schools.
- **1991** Disability Living Allowance introduced.
- **1995** Disability Discrimination Act made discrimination against disabled people unlawful.

However, in 2014, a quarter of disabled people said they lacked control over their daily lives.

8.8B

Campaigns and campaigners

The changes described on page 231 were not easily won. Many individuals and groups contributed to many campaigns that changed attitudes and laws. Here are four examples.

Task

Step 2: Campaigns and campaigners

Use one of the summary panels on this page to record specific examples of how a campaign or campaigner helped your group struggle for equal rights.

Campaign for equal pay for women ... featuring the Dagenham Women

In 1968, the Ford car factory in Dagenham employed 50,000 male workers, but just 187 women. The women sewed the car seat covers.

When the company graded their job as 'unskilled' and paid them less than the men who swept the floor, the women went on strike.

They had to persuade their (male-led) trade union to support them. Most men at the time (and some women) thought women should focus on their families and homes, accept low pay and keep quiet.

Their strike brought car production to a halt. The women marched to Parliament, they spoke to the media and won some public support.

The Minister for Employment at that time was a woman, Barbara Castle. She chaired talks between Ford's managers and the women workers. Eventually in 1984 their jobs were regarded as 'more skilled' and they got pay equality.

Their campaign inspired other women to press for equal pay and two years later, in 1970, Parliament passed the Equal Pay Act.



B Women from the Dagenham Ford factory speaking to news reporters in 1968

Campaign against racism ... featuring Doreen Lawrence

In 1993, Doreen Lawrence's son Stephen was murdered in an unprovoked and racist attack.

Doreen's life changed forever. She started a determined campaign for her son's death to be properly investigated and for his murderers to be prosecuted. It took 18 years, but in the end Stephen's killers were brought to justice.

Doreen Lawrence's campaign brought to light failings, mistakes and obstructions by the Metropolitan Police. In 1999, the Macpherson Report investigated these problems and found that the police force was 'institutionally racist'. That is, the way it operated was racist.

Doreen's courage and determination made her a leader of the wider campaign against racism in



C Doreen Lawrence with a photograph of her murdered son, Stephen

Britain. In 2013, she was made a member of the House of Lords, Baroness Lawrence.

In 2014, BBC 'Woman's Hour' named Doreen Lawrence the most powerful woman in Britain. Her response was to say that she would give up all her achievements 'just to have my family around me'.

Campaign against Section 28 ... featuring Stonewall

In 1988, the British government passed a new law. It included a section (Section 28) that said that local councils should not

'intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality'. This would affect any services that the council provided, for example how schools taught sex education.

Many gay activists believed that Section 28 would prevent young people learning about different sexualities. They campaigned against Section 28. They failed. It became law, but as a result these people formed a new group called 'Stonewall' to campaign for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

Stonewall was well organised and focused on research and campaigning. They continued their opposition to Section 28 and it was repealed in 2003.



D Stonewall activists on the Gay Pride march in 2011

Campaign to improve opportunities for disabled people ... featuring Bill Hargreaves

Bill Hargreaves was born in 1919. He had cerebral palsy and was not expected even to learn to walk. As a boy, he did and, by the age of 22, he was in charge of his father's factory. During the Second World War, Bill worked in a travelling theatre for the troops and got married. In 1953, he became a leader of the national disability charity now known as Scope.

Bill wanted to make life better for people like him. In the late 1950s, he toured Britain to persuade companies to employ more disabled workers. Within five years 1500 people with cerebral palsy had their first jobs.

In 1962, his '62 Clubs' were started as self-help groups, organised by disabled people themselves.

By the time he died in 2000, Bill had been honoured by the Queen for dedicating his life to improving the lives of disabled people.



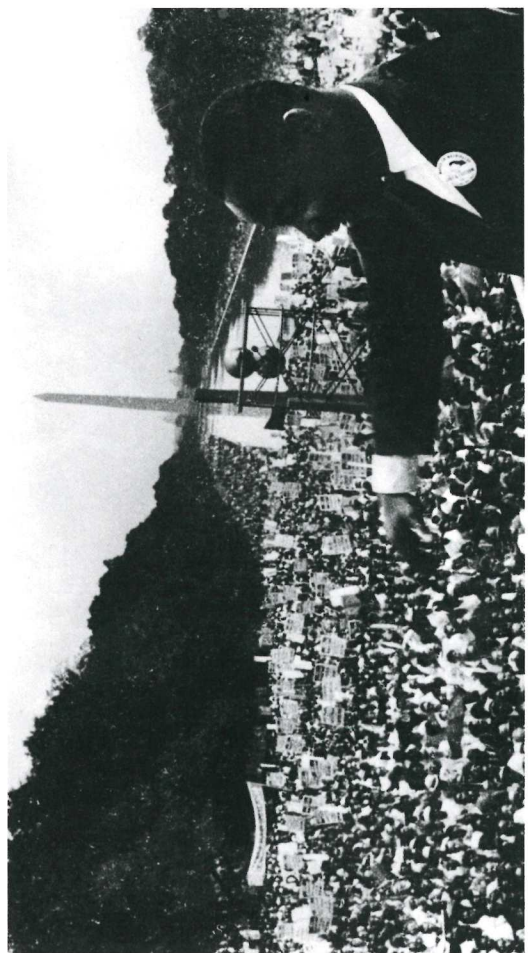
E Bill Hargreaves

Factors and trends

Events in history don't usually have one cause. That's even more true of major developments. There are usually many causes which work together. The campaigns and campaigners that you have studied on the last two pages were important **factors**, but they were helped by other changes taking place in British society.

Factor 1: Civil rights movement in the USA

Through the 1950s and 1960s, the civil rights movement in the USA, led by Martin Luther King, successfully challenged racist laws in America. They inspired similar movements in other countries.



Task

Step 3: Connections

- 1 Use the information on these two pages to find as many connections as you can between the factors and the campaigns you studied on the previous pages. Write a sentence to explain each connection you find. Here are some phrases that you can use:

- were inspired by ...
- had an influence because ...
- played a key part in ...
- contributed to ...
- showed that ...
- allowed ...

F

Martin Luther King

then, people have been able to bring cases to the courts to protect their human rights. For example:

- **Gay rights:** In 2000, the British army was found to have violated the rights of two British servicemen by dismissing them for being gay. This case led to a change in UK law to allow gay members of the armed forces to be open about their sexuality.
- **Disabled rights:** Mr Driscoll was so disabled he was unable to walk unaided. He relied on his wife to help him move around. She was blind and relied on her husband as her eyes. When Mr Driscoll was moved into a residential care home, Mrs Driscoll wanted to move to the home with her husband, but was told she did not meet the criteria. This was a clear breach of the couple's right to a family life as protected by the Human Rights Act. A public campaign was launched to encourage social services to think again. As a result, Mrs Driscoll's needs were re-assessed and the couple were reunited – setting a precedent for elderly couples to be kept together in the same care homes.

Factor 2: UN Declaration of Human Rights

After the horrors of the Second World War, the United Nations created their Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Once members of the UN signed the declaration, their citizens could use it to challenge prejudice or discrimination.

Slowly, these human rights found their way into British law. In 2000, the British government introduced a human rights act for the very first time. It set out the fundamental rights that everyone in the UK is entitled to. This included protection from discrimination. Since

Factor 3: Welfare, affluence and technology

After the Second World War, the Labour government created the **Welfare State**. It ensured that all British people got help if they became ill or unemployed, or as they got old. This greatly helped disabled people. It also greatly helped women, who had always borne the main responsibility for looking after sick or disabled people in their families.

From the 1950s onwards, people in Britain also had a steadily rising standard of living. With more money, people are freer to choose their own lifestyle and are generally more tolerant where they don't have to struggle for jobs and housing.

Cheaper washing machines, vacuum cleaners and fridges made work in the home less tiring and time-consuming. This was traditionally women's work.

Factor 4: Youth culture and protest

In the 1960s, more young people began to question their parents' values. It was a time of protest. This was particularly true in universities where students protested against racism and sexism. In London and Liverpool, university students took over government buildings in protest against racism.

Music played a powerful role in youth culture and also provided focus for protest. For example, a movement called Rock Against Racism was set up in 1978.

Around 100,000 people joined their march from Trafalgar Square to Hackney for an open-air music festival. They chose Hackney because of an increased number of racial attacks in East London. These attacks were being encouraged by the National Front (a far-right party who believe in keeping Britain white).



Factor 5: Positive experience of diversity

Many people also felt their lives were richer because Britain was ethnically diverse. They liked going to school or work with people who were different from them and enjoyed experiencing different food and music.

Companies found that having a better gender balance in their workforce made them more successful.

Factor 6: Social media

Since the later 1990s, the internet and social media have enabled new ways of campaigning. It has become easy to share ideas and to get people to sign a petition or join a campaign. Action to combat prejudice or discrimination can quickly spread.

A famous example is the #MeToo campaign, which has allowed people to share experiences of sexual harassment. It has led to those who are guilty of sexual harassment losing their jobs.

Social media campaigns have also exposed unequal pay for men and women.

Final task

- 2 Use your notes to write an explanation of how and why your group has more equal rights since 1960. Make sure you include:
 - examples of progress from Step 1
 - the role of individual campaigners and campaigns from Step 2
 - the influence of other trends from Step 3.