

# What Is Feminism

## Feminism

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Feminism is a range of socio-political movements and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. Feminism holds the position that modern societies are patriarchal—they prioritize the male point of view—and that women are treated unjustly in these societies. Efforts to change this include fighting against gender stereotypes and improving educational, professional, and interpersonal opportunities and outcomes for women.

Originating in late 18th-century Europe, feminist movements have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to vote, run for public office, work, earn equal pay, own property, receive education, enter into contracts, have equal rights within marriage, and maternity leave. Feminists have also worked to ensure access to contraception, legal abortions, and social integration; and to protect women and girls from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. Changes in female dress standards and acceptable physical activities for women have also been part of feminist movements.

Many scholars consider feminist campaigns to be a main force behind major historical societal changes for women's rights, particularly in the West, where they are near-universally credited with achieving women's suffrage, gender-neutral language, reproductive rights for women (including access to contraceptives and abortion), and the right to enter into contracts and own property. Although feminist advocacy is, and has been, mainly focused on women's rights, some argue for the inclusion of men's liberation within its aims, because they believe that men are also harmed by traditional gender roles. Feminist theory, which emerged from feminist movements, aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experiences. Feminist theorists have developed theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues concerning gender.

Numerous feminist movements and ideologies have developed over the years, representing different viewpoints and political aims. Traditionally, since the 19th century, first-wave liberal feminism, which sought political and legal equality through reforms within a liberal democratic framework, was contrasted with labour-based proletarian women's movements that over time developed into socialist and Marxist feminism based on class struggle theory. Since the 1960s, both of these traditions are also contrasted with the radical feminism that arose from the radical wing of second-wave feminism and that calls for a radical reordering of society to eliminate patriarchy. Liberal, socialist, and radical feminism are sometimes referred to as the "Big Three" schools of feminist thought.

Since the late 20th century, many newer forms of feminism have emerged. Some forms, such as white feminism and gender-critical feminism, have been criticized as taking into account only white, middle class, college-educated, heterosexual, or cisgender perspectives. These criticisms have led to the creation of ethnically specific or multicultural forms of feminism, such as black feminism and intersectional feminism.

## Men in feminism

*inclusion, in feminism has been linked to the disconnect between gender and intersecting components of identity. One example of this is that some African*

## Fourth-wave feminism

*Fourth-wave feminism is a feminist movement that began around 2012 and is characterized by a focus on the empowerment of women, the use of internet tools*

Fourth-wave feminism is a feminist movement that began around 2012 and is characterized by a focus on the empowerment of women, the use of internet tools, and intersectionality. According to Rosemary Clark-Parsons, digital platforms have allowed feminist movements to become more connected and visible, allowing activists to reach a global audience and act on it in real time. The fourth wave seeks greater gender equality by focusing on gendered norms and the marginalization of women in society. These online tools open up the doors for empowerment for all women by giving opportunities for diverse voices, particularly those from marginalized communities to contribute to a wide range of people pushing for a more inclusive movement.

Fourth-wave feminism focuses on sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, the objectification of women, and sexism in the workplace. Internet activism is a key feature of the fourth wave, used to amplify awareness of these issues. Fourth-wave feminism broadens its focus to other groups, including the LGBTQ+ community and people of color, and advocates for their increased societal participation and power. It also advocates for equal incomes regardless of sex and challenges traditional gender roles for men and women, which it believes are oppressive. The movement further argues against sexual assault, objectification, harassment and gender-based violence.

Some have identified the movement as a reaction to post-feminism, which argues that women and men have already reached equality. It also brought back some second-wave feminism ideas into discourse, with Martha Rampton writing that the movement criticises "sexual abuse, rape, violence against women, unequal pay, slut-shaming, the pressure on women to conform to a single and unrealistic body-type", and advocates for "gains in female representation in politics and business".

## Girlboss

*proposed cuts at the university, stating "Girlboss feminism? I'm not sure what girlboss feminism is." For a time, female wealth was treated as feel-good*

"Girlboss" is a neologism that denotes a woman "whose success is defined in opposition to the masculine business world in which she swims upstream". They are described as confident and capable women who are successful in their career, or the one who pursues her own ambitions, instead of working for others or otherwise settling in life. A similar and related term is "boss babe".

Popularised by Sophia Amoruso in her 2014 book *Girlboss*, the concept's ethos has been described as "convenient incrementalism"; the goal being not to dismantle the disproportionate power acquired by men under the coexistence of patriarchy and capitalism, but to take that power for women themselves. This has led to sarcastic and pejorative undertones when using the term, denoting women who attempt to raise their professional lives by practicing the same abusive and materialistic practices found in patriarchal society.

## Third-wave feminism

*and postmodern feminism. According to feminist scholar Elizabeth Evans, the "confusion surrounding what constitutes third-wave feminism is in some respects*

Third-wave feminism is a feminist movement that began in the early 1990s; it was prominent in the decades prior to the fourth wave. Grounded in the civil-rights advances of the second wave, Gen X third-wave feminists born in the 1960s and 1970s embraced diversity and individualism in women, and sought to redefine what it meant to be a feminist. The third wave saw the emergence of new feminist currents and theories, such as intersectionality, sex positivity, vegetarian ecofeminism, transfeminism, and postmodern feminism. According to feminist scholar Elizabeth Evans, the "confusion surrounding what constitutes third-wave feminism is in some respects its defining feature."

The third wave is traced to Anita Hill's televised testimony in 1991 to an all-male all-white Senate Judiciary Committee that the judge Clarence Thomas had sexually harassed her. The term third wave is credited to Rebecca Walker, who responded to Thomas' appointment to the Supreme Court with an article in Ms. magazine, "Becoming the Third Wave" (1992). She wrote:

So I write this as a plea to all women, especially women of my generation: Let Thomas' confirmation serve to remind you, as it did me, that the fight is far from over. Let this dismissal of a woman's experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power. Do not vote for them unless they work for us. Do not have sex with them, do not break bread with them, do not nurture them if they don't prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives. I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the Third Wave.

Walker sought to establish that third-wave feminism was not just a reaction but a movement in itself because the feminist cause had more work ahead. The term intersectionality to describe the idea that women experience "layers of oppression" caused, for example, by gender, race, and class had been introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, and it was during the third wave that the concept flourished.

In addition, third-wave feminism is traced to the emergence of the riot grrrl feminist punk subculture in Olympia, Washington, in the early 1990s. As feminists came online in the late 1990s and early 2000s and reached a global audience with blogs and e-zines, they broadened their goals, focusing on abolishing gender-role stereotypes and expanding feminism to include women with diverse racial and cultural identities.

### Sex-positive feminism

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Sex-positive feminism, also known as pro-sex feminism, sex-radical feminism, or sexually liberal feminism, is a feminist movement centering on the idea that sexual freedom is an essential component of women's freedom. They oppose legal or social efforts to control sexual activities between consenting adults, whether they are initiated by the government, other feminists, opponents of feminism, or any other institution. They embrace sexual minority groups, endorsing the value of coalition-building with marginalized groups. Sex-positive feminism is connected with the sex-positive movement. Sex-positive feminism brings together anti-censorship activists, LGBT activists, feminist scholars, producers of pornography and erotica, among others. Sex-positive feminists believe that prostitution can be a positive experience if workers are treated with respect, and agree that sex work should not be criminalized.

### Feminist movements and ideologies

*Traditionally feminism is often divided into three main traditions, sometimes known as the "Big Three" schools of feminist thought: liberal/mainstream feminism, radical*

A variety of movements of feminist ideology have developed over the years. They vary in goals, strategies, and affiliations. They often overlap, and some feminists identify themselves with several branches of feminist thought.

### Postfeminism

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Postfeminism (alternatively rendered as post-feminism) is an alleged decrease in popular support for feminism from the 1990s onwards. It can be considered a critical way of understanding the changed relations among feminism, femininity and popular culture. The term is sometimes confused with subsequent feminisms such as postmodern feminism, xenofeminism, and the fourth wave.

Research conducted at Kent State University in the 2000s narrowed postfeminism to four main claims: support for feminism declined; women began hating feminism and feminists; society had already attained social equality, thus making feminism outdated; and the label "feminist" has a negative stigma.

## Radical feminism

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Radical feminism is a perspective within feminism that calls for a radical re-ordering of society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic contexts, while recognizing that women's experiences are also affected by other social divisions such as in race, class, and sexual orientation. The ideology and movement emerged in the 1960s.

Radical feminists view society fundamentally as a patriarchy in which men dominate and oppress women. Radical feminists seek to abolish the patriarchy in a struggle to liberate women and girls from an unjust society by challenging existing social norms and institutions. This struggle includes opposing the sexual objectification of women, raising public awareness about such issues as rape and other violence against women, challenging the concept of gender roles, and challenging what radical feminists see as a racialized and gendered capitalism that characterizes the United States, the United Kingdom, and many other countries. According to Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970): "[T]he end goal of feminist revolution must be, unlike that of the first feminist movement, not just the elimination of male privilege but of the sex distinction itself: genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally." While radical feminists believe that differences in genitalia and secondary sex characteristics should not matter culturally or politically, they also maintain that women's special role in reproduction should be recognized and accommodated without penalty in the workplace, and some have argued compensation should be offered for this socially essential work.

Radical feminists locate the root cause of women's oppression in patriarchal gender relations, as opposed to legal systems (as in liberal feminism) or class conflict (as in Marxist feminism). Early radical feminism, arising within second-wave feminism in the 1960s, typically viewed patriarchy as a "transhistorical phenomenon" prior to or deeper than other sources of oppression, "not only the oldest and most universal form of domination but the primary form" and the model for all others. Later politics derived from radical feminism ranged from cultural feminism to syncretic forms of socialist feminism (such as anarcha-feminism) that place issues of social class, economics, and the like on a par with patriarchy as sources of oppression.

## Anarcha-feminism

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Anarcha-feminism, also known as anarchist feminism or anarcho-feminism, is a system of analysis which combines the principles and power analysis of anarchist theory with feminism. It closely resembles intersectional feminism. Anarcha-feminism generally posits that patriarchy and traditional gender roles as manifestations of involuntary coercive hierarchy should be replaced by decentralized free association. Anarcha-feminists believe that the struggle against patriarchy is an essential part of class conflict and the anarchist struggle against the state and capitalism. In essence, the philosophy sees anarchist struggle as a necessary component of feminist struggle and vice versa. Canadian anarcha-feminist writer L. Susan Brown claims that "as anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist".

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