



The Marriage Bar

A ban on employing married women

What was the Marriage Bar?

- The Marriage Bar -
 - required single women to resign from their job when they married.
 - disqualified married women from applying for permanent jobs.
 - formal (law) in public sector, informal (tradition) in private sector.
 - unquestioning approval of public and politicians.
 - widespread across Europe and English-speaking world.
 - Ireland and NI one of the last to abolish Marriage Bar.



Acts of Union (1801) – Independence (1922)

- **1844:** Women working in industry restricted to working same hours as children.
- **1875:** First women public servants hired as clerks in Post Office Savings Bank.
 - Terms of employment requires them to resign as soon as they marry.
- **1890:** First women civil servants hired as typists in 7 government departments.
 - Women win campaign to be made permanent. Marriage Bar in contract.
 - Paid a 'marriage gratuity' = one month's pay for each year worked.
- **1891:** Ban on employing women 4 weeks before & 4 weeks after childbirth.
- **1894:** Trade unions call for a Marriage Bar on women working in industry.
 - Ban on *all* women working factory jobs dangerous to *future* childbearing.
- **1915:** Patriotic appeal to women to take up jobs *of any kind* to help war effort.
 - Unions win commitment hiring restrictions will be re-instated after WWI.
- **1921:** Marriage Bar in the civil service is made more formal.

Independence (1922) – EU Membership (1973)

- **1923:** Women civil servants lose their right to return to their job if widowed.
- **1925:** Higher pay rates paid to married men in civil and public service.
- **1926:** Women graduates banned from civil service entry exams for senior jobs.
- **1934:** Marriage Bar on newly qualified women teachers in national schools.
- **1946:** Marriage Bar ends in British civil service.
 - Remains in civil service and local government in Northern Ireland.
- **1958:** Marriage Bar ends for women primary school teachers.
- **1958:** First women gardai employed. Marriage Bar in contract.
- **1973:** Legislation ends (formal) Marriage Bar in civil service, in line with EU rules
 - Former civil servants can get old job back if proves financial hardship.
- **1974:** Local authorities, health boards and gardaí end Marriage Bar.
- **1977:** Informal Marriage Bar outlawed by European anti-discrimination law.

Thank You!



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