



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 upon getting married.
 - Disqualified married women from applying for permanent vacancies.
 - Formal (public sector) and informal (private sector).
 - Common across Europe and English-speaking world.
- But, unique to Ireland the Marriage Bar -
 - Pursued with unwavering enthusiasm.
 - Ireland & NI one of the last to abolish Marriage Bars.



Acts of Union (1801) – Independence (1922)

- **1844:** Women working in industry restricted to same work hours as children.
- **1880:** First women public servants employed (as clerks) in Postal Savings Banks.
 - Married women ineligible. Contract requires resignation on marriage.
- **1890:** First women civil servants employed (as typists) in 7 govt. departments.
 - Women campaign to be made permanent. Marriage Bar in contract.
 - Paid a 'marriage gratuity' in place of her future pension.
- **1891:** Ban on employing women 4 weeks before & 4 weeks after childbirth.
- **1894:** Trade unions call for an employment ban on married women in industry.
 - Ban on women working factory jobs dangerous to *future* childbearing.
- **1915:** Appeal for women to take up employment *of any kind* to help war effort.
 - Trade unions win pledge pre-war practices will be restored at end of war.
- **1921:** Marriage Bar in civil service is put into legislation.

Independence (1922) – EEC Membership (1973)

- **1923:** Women civil servants lose their right to return to their job if widowed.
- **1925:** Male civil servants receive marriage bonus & increments for children.
- **1926:** Women graduates excluded from civil service open competitions.
- **1934:** Women national school teachers required to resign on marriage.
- **1944:** Marriage Bar ends in British civil service.
 - Remains in civil service and local government in Northern Ireland.
- **1958:** Marriage Bar ends for women teachers in primary schools.
- **1958:** First ban gardai/ police women employed. Marriage Bar in contract.
- **1973:** Marriage Bar ends in Irish civil service.
 - Former civil servants can get job back, if she proves financial necessity.
- **1973:** Women keep their social insurance contribution record after marriage.
- **1977:** All outstanding Marriage Bars outlawed in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Thank You!



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