

Origin of the International Women's Day

In August 1910, an International Women's Conference was organized to precede the general meeting of the Socialist Second International in Copenhagen, Denmark. Inspired in part by the American socialists, German Socialist Luise Zietz proposed the establishment of an annual 'International Woman's Day' (singular) and was seconded by fellow socialist and later communist leader Clara Zetkin, although no date was specified at that conference. Delegates (100 women from 17 countries) agreed with the idea as a strategy to promote equal rights, including suffrage, for women. The following year, on March 19, 1911, IWD was marked for the first time, by over a million people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire alone, there were 300 demonstrations. In Vienna, women paraded on the Ringstrasse and carried banners honouring the martyrs of the Paris Commune. Women demanded that women be given the right to vote and to hold public office. They also protested against employment sex discrimination. Americans continued to celebrate National Women's Day on the last Sunday in February.

In 1913 Russian women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February (by Julian calendar then used in Russia).

Although there were some women-led strikes, marches, and other protests in the years leading up to 1914, none of them happened on March 8. In 1914 International Women's Day was held on March 8, possibly because that day was a Sunday, and now it is always held on March 8 in all countries. The [1914 observance of the Day in Germany](#) was dedicated to women's right to vote, which German women did not win until 1918.

In London there was a march from Bow to Trafalgar Square in support of women's suffrage on 8 March 1914.

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