

# STRIKING WOMEN | WOMEN AND WORK

» Women have always worked, whether in paid jobs, or in the home, and often in both. But their work is generally unrecognised and undervalued. Today, women comprise nearly half of the UK's workforce. While there have been many important changes in recent decades, there are many continuities in the issues women workers face in the workplace. This module gives an account of women's waged work in the UK from the 19th century to the present day. The issues examined here include the nature and types of work available to women, pay and conditions at work, women's struggles for rights and the particular issues facing migrant women workers.

## Objectives of Module

- To understand that women have always worked, in a wide variety of jobs.
- To understand that women's work is often unrecognised and undervalued and the reasons for this.
- To understand how women's paid work has changed since the 19th century.
- To understand that women have contributed to social change through women's liberation movements and struggles for improved rights for women and migrant workers.

## 1. Women and Work in The 19th and Early 20th Century



20 mins

### 19th Century

Examine the data contained in the table, which was collected from Wolverhampton during the census in 1901. The census shows that 11.9% of married women were working, with almost half of unmarried women in paid occupations.

### The Occupation of Females in 1901

Type of work	Number employed
Domestic	2,983
Misc. metal trades	1208
Dressmaking	939
Food, drink, lodging	914
Teaching	555
Charwoman	359
Laundry	348
Tailoring	267
Leather, hair	51
Textiles	38
China	2
Others	3,022

How useful are these official statistics for understanding the extent and types of women's work in the 1900s?



Source: <http://www.wolverhamptonhistory.org.uk/work/women/20th>





Women's work was not included within statistics on waged work in official records, altering our perspective on the work women undertook"

Find evidence within the table 'The Occupation of Females in 1901' that supports and contradicts this quote.

## EVIDENCE

**Supports**

**Contradicts**



**DISCUSS**

**15 mins**

What does the evidence below tell us about the conditions of women and children working in the 'sweated industries' in 1841?

Evidence given by Children's Employment Commission - February 1841

"Miss --- has been for several years in the dress-making business...The common hours of business are from 8 a.m. til 11 P.M in the winters; in the summer from 6 or half-past 6 A.M. til 12 at night. During the fashionable season, that is from April til the latter end of July, it frequently happens that the ordinary hours are greatly exceeded; if there is a drawing-room or grand fete, or mourning to be made, it often happens that the work goes on for 20 hours out of the 24, occasionally all night....The general result of the long hours and sedentary occupation is to impair seriously and very frequently to destroy the health of the young women. The digestion especially suffers, and also the lungs: pain to the side is very common, and the hands and feet die away from want of circulation and exercise, "never seeing the outside of the door from Sunday to Sunday." [One cause] is the short time which is allowed by ladies to have their dresses made.

Miss ... is sure that there are some thousands of young women employed in the business in London and in the country. If one vacancy were to occur now there would be 20 applicants for it. The wages generally are very low...Thinks that no men could endure the work enforced from the dress-makers."

Imagine you are a member of the 'Women and Children's Employment Commission' - draw up a list of recommendations to improve the working conditions for women working in these industries.

**List Of Recommendations:**







20 mins

## Wages and Women

These two tables show 'wages paid to workers at Courtauld textile mill in Halstead, Essex in 1860'

### The wages paid to workers at Courtauld textile mill in Halstead, Essex in 1860\*

Males	Weekly Wages (shillings)	Number
Mill Manager (also got 3 % of profits from mill)	1000 pounds per year	1
Overseers and clerks	15s-32s	26
Mechanics & engine drivers	17s-25s	6
Carpenters & blacksmiths	14s-21s	3
Lodgekeeper	15s	1
Power loom machinery, attendants and steamers	14s-15s	16
Mill machinery attendants & loom cleaners	10s-15s	18
Spindle cleaners, bobbin stampers & packers, messengers, sweepers	5s-12s	5
Watchmen	7s-10s	-
Coachmen, grooms & van driver	5s-10s	-
Winders	2s-4s	38
<b>Total Males</b>		<b>114</b>

Females	Weekly Wages (shillings)	Number
Gauze examiners	10s-11s	4
Female assistant overseers	9s-10s	4
Warpers	7s-10s	16
Twisters	7s-10s	9
Wasters	6s-9s	4
Weavers	5s-8s	589
Plugwinders	6s-9s	2
Drawers and doublers	4s-6s	83
Winders	2s-4s	188
<b>Total Females</b>		<b>899</b>
<b>Grand Total Workforce</b>		<b>1013</b>

**Source:** For Courtland silk factory wages: Carol Adams, Paula Bartley, Judy Lown, Cathy Loxton, *Under Control: Life in a nineteenth-century Silk Factory*, Cambridge University Press.

\*Until decimalisation of the currency in 1971, the pound was divided into 20 shillings

Complete these two statements, using evidence from the tables relating to wages from different categories of workers, and understanding gained from reading the 'women and work in the 19th century' section.



Men and women had different jobs in this factory, such as....

The differences between earnings of men and women were...

The reasons for these differences were...

The reasons for these differences were...

# **ANNOTATE** 30 mins

Create a timeline showing 'The first women in Britain of various occupations' using information taken from the 'Women and Work in the 19th Century' annotate activity box. Use symbols, words and pictures to help bring these important events to life.

Click on the links within the 'Annotate' activity icon to find out more about these women.

1865



Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917) was the first British woman to...

1876



An act was passed permitting...

1895



**Lilian Murray** was the first woman to...

1898



**Ethel Charles** was the first woman to qualify as...

1916



The first \_\_\_\_\_ was appointed in Britain

1919



The Sex Disqualification Removal Act allowed...

1908



**Elizabeth Garrett Anderson** (1836-1917) was the first woman to become...

1919



**Nancy Astor** became...

1922



**Carrie Morrison** was...

1929

**Margaret Bondfield** became the first...



**After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:**

- ☐ Understand how statistics have skewed our understanding about the work women undertook in the 19th century.
- ☐ Explain how women's occupations during the second half of the 19th and early 20th century varied and were many.
- ☐ Understand that the work a woman did was determined by her social and economic class.



## 2. The Impact of WWI on Women's Work



EXAMINE

30 mins

### Women's Work in WW1

» Watch the 2 videos: 'Women on the Home Front' & 'Women at War'

These are accessible on the 'Striking Women' website. Answer the following questions:

How many jobs can you identify women undertaking in the two video clips?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What does "social revolution" mean?

A social revolution is....



How did women's entry into the workplace during WW1 contribute to the war effort?

What was the main message in the government propaganda film shown in 'Women at War'?



DISCUSS

15 mins

» Watch the video: 'Women and the Great War'

This video depicts the experiences of women working in an ammunitions factory during WW1. Now discuss the following:

1. Why did "order" need to be kept in factories?
2. Why were the women workers called "canaries"?
3. What were the long term impacts of women's entry into the workplace during WW1?



30 mins

## Women's Wages and Rights

Using images and documents contained in the 'gallery' and text contained within the 'Women, Wages and Rights' section create a 5-minute presentation, which explores the issues surrounding 'Women, Wages and Rights'.

### You should explore the following in your presentation:

- Introduce the topic of 'Women, Wages and Rights'
- Give an argument for the equal pay of women workers
- Give an argument against the equal pay of women workers
- Outline the agreement reached on women's wages by government in 'equal pay for equal work'
- Conclude and give your opinion on the information contained in your presentation

## WHAT MAKES A STRONG PRESENTATION?

- Use evidence, statistics and quotes to support your arguments
- Never have too much text on one slide
- Get to the point and keep your points straightforward
- Keep your presentation short, have no more than 3 slides in a 5 minute presentation
- Be careful with your choice of font, colour and layout
- Have a title on each slide
- Take time when you talk, be clear and make eye contact
- Make sure you introduce your presentation, then when concluding link back to your introduction



Use images to enhance your main points



**After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:**

- ☐ Describe the roles women played in the workplace during WWI.
- ☐ Explain the reasons why women's participation in the workplace increased during WWI.
- ☐ Evaluate the differences in wages between men and women and the consequences of this inequality on living standards.
- ☐ Analyse the short and long term consequences of the increased participation of women in the workplace during WWI.



### 3. Women's Work During Interwar Years 1918-1939



**DISTINGUISH**

20 mins

#### Post WW1 and Work

Categorise the following statements according to the list provided below:

There were more job opportunities for women in the 1920s and 1930s due to better education.

Women were better educated as a result of the Education Acts of 1902 and 1918.

Many women found work as clerks, teachers and nurses.

The nature of industries changed and new types of work emerged.

The civil service did not allow women to work after marriage.

The Sex Disqualification Act of 1919 made it easier for women to go to university and enter the professions. Middle class women benefited from increased job opportunities.

One tenth of married women worked.

Many women found work in the new light industries e.g. making electrical goods.

The Marriage Bar prevented many women from staying at work after marriage.

New electrical appliances such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners slightly improved the working conditions of some housewives in the 1930s.

By the 1930s, about one third of women in Britain worked outside the home.

Working conditions in the home remained very hard. Cleaning, washing and cooking took up a great deal of time.



Cut out each statement and place them in a category of 'best fit':

**Types of Work**

**Restrictions on Women**

**Opportunities for Women**

**Change**

You may also create your own categories:

**DISCUSS****15 mins**

### » Watch the video: 'Women and Work in the Inter-War Period'

Then discuss these questions:

1. What role did education play in helping women enter the workplace?
2. What 'social changes' did working women experience?
3. What were the political changes that took place during this period?



**After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:**

- ☐ Explain the changes that took place in relation to women in the workplace after WW1
- ☐ Describe the action working women took in response to these changes.
- ☐ Evaluate the changes to British society, women's lives and politics, which occurred post WW1.

## 4. The Impact of WWII on Women's Work

**ANNOTATE****30 mins**

Create an infographic using the following figures:

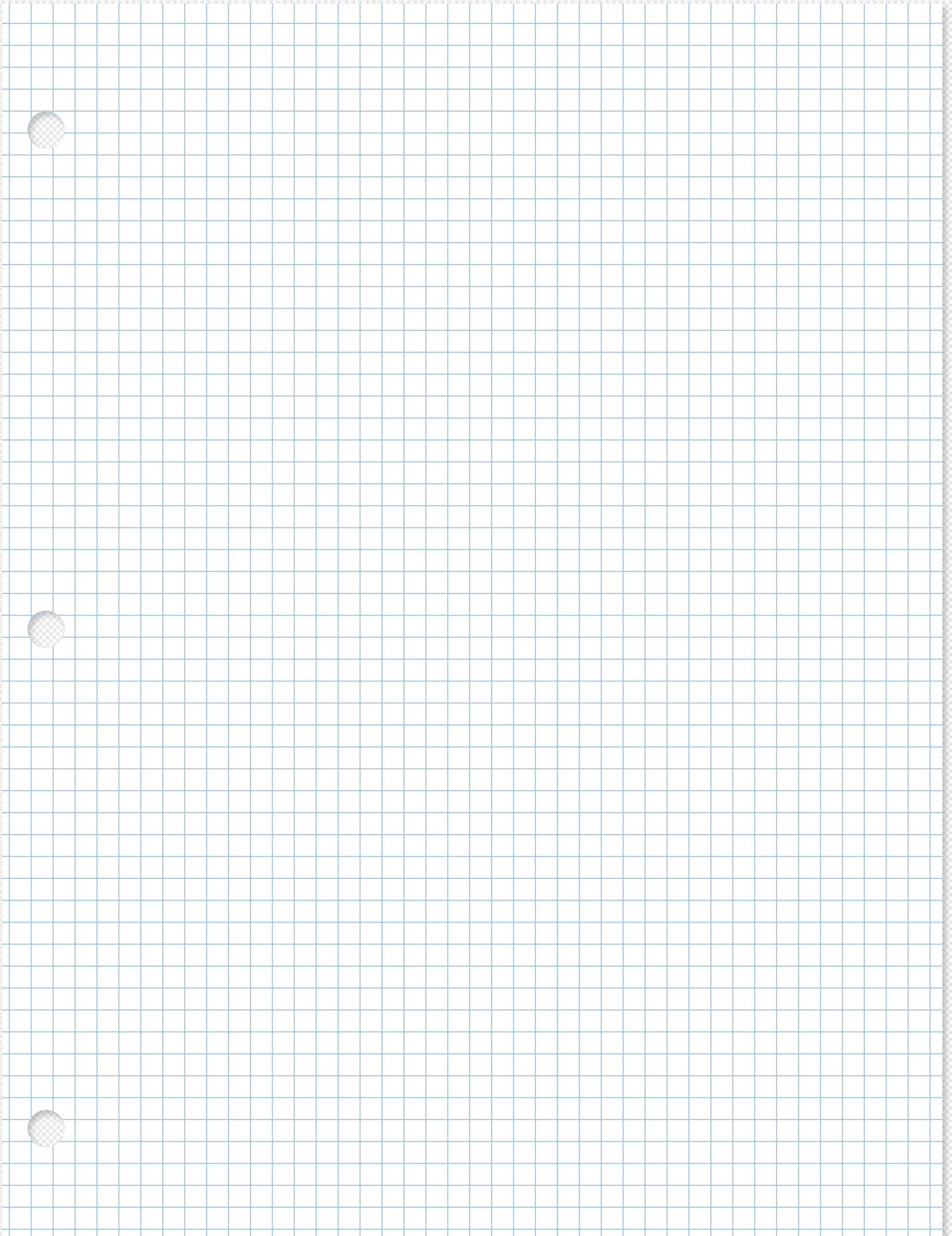
- Women's employment increased during the Second World War from about 5.1 million in 1939 (26%) to just over 7.25 million in 1943 (36%) as a percentage of all women of working age.
- 46% of all women aged between 14 and 59 and 90% of all single women between the ages of 18 and 40 were engaged in some form of work or National Service by September 1943.

### What is an infographic?

- An infographic (information graphics) is a way to visually represent data.
- They present information quickly and clearly by using images, graphics, key words and figures.
- Your infographic should help the reader understand the information provided, without the need for lots of text and explanation.
- Make sure your infographic is engaging, bright, informative and simple.



# INFOGRAPHIC



## EXAMINE 30 mins

### » Read the text 'Women under fire'

Text can be located by following the link in the examine activity box.

Create a short performance, which depicts the 'life of a young woman entering the world of work' for the first time during WWII.

Your performance should be no longer than 3 minutes long.

You can create a monologue (meaning you perform the piece on your own) or you can perform with others (smaller groups are better).



#### In your performance you must use:

- Quotes
- Facts and Figures
- Information taken from the text 'Women under fire' as the basis for your script

## DISCUSS 10 mins

What role did the government play in getting women into the workplace during WWII?



You must read the text from this section and discuss the role, both positive and negative, that the government played, the specific actions they took, and the impact this had on women in work during WWII.



**After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:**

- ☐ Explain the impact World War II had on women in work.
- ☐ Describe the inequalities that continued during WWII in relation to women's wages in comparison to men's wages.
- ☐ Evaluate how these inequalities and impacts led to the growth of women workers' movements.



## 5. Women and Work After WWII: 1946-1970



20 mins

### Gains and Losses for Women After WWII

» Watch the two film clips 'Woman's Place is in the Home?' and 'Advertisements in the 1950s'

Discuss the role of propaganda in reinforcing gender stereotypes in these films.

Compare this to the propaganda produced in order to recruit women to the workplace during WWI. Has the message changed?

Why do you think the message changed relating to the roles women could play in society after the soldiers returned from WWII?

Do gender stereotypes still exist in the media today? Think of examples.

Do you think there is still a perception that there are 'men's jobs' and 'women's jobs'? If so, give some examples of such jobs.

Do you agree or disagree with the perception that men and women should do different types of jobs? Explain your reasons.







20 mins



1. Why did the UK government encourage the immigration of migrant workers after WWII?

2. Were these workers welcomed by the residents of the UK? Draw upon evidence to support your answer.

3. What action did these migrant workers take in response to the conditions they experienced in some factories?



After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:

- ☐ Describe the gains and losses experienced by women in the workplace after World War II and the contributing factors.
- ☐ Explain the changes that took place in post WWII Britain for women, including the struggle for rights at work.
- ☐ Examine the role strikes have played in gaining rights for women in the workplace.
- ☐ Analyse the reasons for the encouragement by the British government of immigrant workers after WWII.



## 6. Women and Work from 1971 - Present



DISCUSS

5 mins

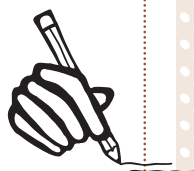
### Addressing Inequalities

How have trade unions in the UK changed over time?



EXAMINE

30 mins



1. What does the 'second shift' mean?



2. What impacts could a 'second shift' have on women?



## » Read the article: '40 Years of Feminism, But Women Still Do The Housework'



How could the burden of a 'second shift' be reduced?

- In the spaces provided create a list of 'top 5' solutions needed in order to bring an end to the 'second shift' for women. **Cut these strips out.**
- Rank these choices in order of 'importance' for women. Number 1 being the most important and number 5 being the least important.
- After making your choices, re-order your solutions in order of the 'most likely to happen' - number 1 being most likely and number 5 being least likely
- Now discuss how these two lists differ and discuss the reasons why.



EXPLAIN

10 mins



1. What restrictions prevent women from fully participating in the workplace?

2. What impact has 'subcontracting' had on women in work?

3. How will public sector cuts impact women's work?





If you compare women who are available for paid work in 2001, over 40% of Bangladeshi women without degrees were unemployed compared with only 6.7% of white women. For those with degrees the figures are much lower, with only 8.2% of Bangladeshi women graduates unemployed, but only 2.4% of white women graduates unemployed' (Clark and Drinkwater, 2005)

What do these statistics show us about:



1. Work?

2. Migrant Women?

3. Education?



**After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:**

- ☐ Examine the changes that have occurred over time for women in the workplace and how relevant these changes are to the present day.
- ☐ Understand what restrictions women face in the workplace and explain why they face these restrictions.
- ☐ Suggest reasons why women migrants and women who are not educated face further restrictions in accessing opportunities in the workplace.