

WOMEN IN WORLD WAR ONE

Women played a vital role during World War I. Large numbers of men had gone to fight in the war, so women were recruited to fill the jobs they had left behind. Many women also worked in military support roles as nurses.

The high demand for weapons resulted in the munitions (weapons and ammunition) factories becoming the largest employer of women during 1918.

At the start of the war, there was resistance to hiring women for what was seen as 'men's work'; however, once conscription (mandatory military service) was introduced in 1916, it was vital for women to be employed.

There was also an increase in employment rates for women in what were already traditional areas of women's work – in the clothing and footwear, food, and printing sectors.

Between 1914 and 1918, women's employment rates nearly doubled. Women were paid less than men, resulting in a concern that returning soldiers would be out of work due to their higher wages. This proved false and many women were either sacked or remained on lower wages, while their male counterparts received higher pay. This wage inequality prompted many women to strike and demand an increase in pay.

Other women also played a significant role in the war effort, undertaking fundraising and recruiting activities, as well as organising comfort packages for soldiers serving overseas.

