

Social consequences of industrialisation in britain

[Economics](#)



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In this report I am going to discuss the social consequences of industrialisation in Britain between 1800- and 1850. I will analyse the trends in population movements from rural settings to the city and discuss their causes. I will also discuss social structures of the time and explain how they were affected by industrialisation. I will analyse wealth in regards to distribution amongst the classes and how they differed.

Lastly I will discuss such social conditions as living and working conditions, health and sanitation, law and order and education and reforms and laws which were set up as a means of trying to better people's lives. Introduction Poverty was a concept that people in Britain in the Victorian age struggled with. Were the destitute victims of circumstances, idle and work shy or the victims of industrialisation?

There was also the question of who should be responsible for the poor, should society take care of them or as many believed should they simply be left to their own devices? The hymn ' All things bright and beautiful show a typical view on poverty; ' The rich man in his castle, The poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly, And ordered their estate. ' With the onset of industrialisation and population shift, people began to question their place in society and anticipate whether they could indeed change this.

Population migration

The reasons for migration from the country to the city during the 18th and 19th centuries is mainly threefold, for one the population in the country began to grow, this is attributed to the drop in infant mortality rate and the surplus in births over deaths, secondly the invention of farm enhancing methods drastically reduced the need for an agricultural workforce, that, in <https://assignbuster.com/social-consequences-of-industrialisation-in-britain/>

conjunction with the development of large mass producing factories within the cities drew people away as there was more employment opportunity.

Lastly, the north became a hub for large scale industrialisation as it was in abundance with raw materials such as coal and iron which fuelled the rate of growth, while the south was the bread basket of the country. The population of northern cities such as Manchester grew from 25, 000 in 1772 to 303, 000 by 1850. By 1850, Britain was the only country in the world to have a larger urban population than rural. Social and occupational structure At the beginning of the 19th century, British population was very much ranked in classes; this was a way of assessing ones wealth and developing a social structure.

The land owners and nobility were at the top of this structure, these people were the ones in charge of the county. This power derived from the fact that only the wealthy land owners were permitted to vote therefore they would only permit laws which benefited themselves. With the rise of industrialization a new ‘ middle class’ was born. This was usually wealthy merchants who had invested in factories and become very rich. They were not however always land owners and therefore unable to vote.

The mill owners began to feel they deserved the right to vote. They indeed paid taxes and contributed heavily to the economy and in many cases were far wealthier than the blue blood land owners. The Whigs saw the middle classes push for the vote as a way to gain power, they knew if they could get a reformation on voting passed they would gain masses of support from the middle class. The Tories however resisted this. After the Whigs came to

power in 1830, they tried several times to pass a reformation act, which the Tories repeatedly blocked.

This was only passed when Earl Grey appealed directly to the king, who agreed to create more Whig lords. This did not please the Tory lords who then gave in and agreed to pass the Reformation Act. The working class were unaffected by this reformation in voting and began pushing for power and began organising trade unions to stand up for their rights against employers. The employers however banned groups of workers congregating in order to prevent them from rising up. Distribution of wealth Workers at this time were treated very badly, there were no laws specifying working times or wages.

Meaning employers could pay as little as they wanted and workers were usually expected to work up to 19 hours per day 6 days a week. Work conditions were usually dangerous and accidents could easily happen. Despite these bad conditions however workers had little choice but to put up with them as work was hard to come by and there were often long lines of unemployed people queuing for their jobs. Many woman and children as young as 3 were employed in the factories until 1819 Cotton Mills act was passed preventing children under 9 from working and children under 16 from working more then 12 hours.

Due to this exploitation of workers, the mill owners became fabulously wealthy. In addition to exploiting their workers, areas such as the textile trade imported cheap raw materials and sold them on for a large profit. Life in industrial cities Law and order Due to the poverty of many crime rates soared in the 19th century, in 1800 75% of these were petty thefts such as <https://assignbuster.com/social-consequences-of-industrialisation-in-britain/>

pick pocketing many of these were children, this is explored in Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, with his depiction of Fagin's gang of pickpockets.

Many people were also involved in marches as a way of campaigning for their rights and gaining fairer wages /wanting the right to vote and actions such as the Luddites revolt. The judicial system of the time was varied and punishments such as prison, hanging and deportation were given out. In 1829 the Metropolitan Police were set up and in 1835 towns were allowed to set up their own police force. Education Before 1870, there was no standardised way of educating children in Britain; there was no Free State education until 1891.

Prior to this the majority of children receiving education were those of the wealthy they were often educated at home by nannies. Once the boys were old enough (around 10/11) they would be sent to public school i. e. Eaton then progress to law school or become doctors. . Children of the poor were sent out to work when they were deemed old enough, education was not as important as earning a wage. However with the Poor Law Amendment Act, children entering the workhouse were also to receive education. Living conditions:

Due to the rate of urban expansion houses were built quickly and were of poor quality, with areas often being referred to as 'slums'. There was often housing shortages which resulted in cramped living spaces where whole families often lived in one room. 'Hideous slums, some of them acres wide, some no more than crannies of obscure misery, make up a substantial part of the metropolis ... In big, once handsome houses, thirty or more people of all ages may inhabit a single room' Due to the high rent charges imposed by

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landlords and the growing demand for jobs many people became homeless and lived on the streets. The streets were frightening places and this poverty and destitution gave rise to such social problems as alcoholism and prostitution as a way of escaping and making ends meet. Health conditions These cramped conditions also meant little to no sanitation which led on to the spread of disease such as cholera, typhoid and smallpox. In an article in 1849, author Henry Mayhew wrote how a ditch ran through the streets of London into which sewage emptied from this ditch the people would also drink. As we gazed in horror at it, we saw drains and sewers emptying their filthy contents into it; we saw a whole tier of doorless privies in the open road, common to men and women built over it; we heard bucket after bucket of filth splash into it' Bad health for the poor can also be attributed to the corn law of 1804, in that the landowners imposed taxes on imported corn to protect their profits, thus making the price of bread, a staple of the poor man's diet, far more expensive. This in conjunction with a bad harvest in 1816 meant prices became higher still.

Edwin Chadwick was a huge influence on the development of sanitation when he published 'The Chadwick Report' The Chadwick report In 1837, there were epidemics of influenza and typhoid. Edwin Chadwick was asked to compile a report looking at the living conditions of the poor. He conducted his report between 1839 and 1841. In his report he argued that disease was a direct result of poor sanitary conditions, concluding that reform must be made. In 1848 the 'Public Health Act' was passed. This act ensured that water and sewage supplies were clean as well as cleaning the streets and refuse collection was introduced.

Chadwick was appointed Sanitation Commissioner and also president of the association of public sanitary inspectors in 1884. During his time in these roles he argued ways public health could be improved. These included the availability of fresh, clean water, water closets in every house and a sewage network which disposed of waste far away from inhabited areas. The old poor law The old poor law was introduced in 1601 and gave help to any poor person within the parish be it through monetary means, medical or the giving offood. This relief was paid for via poor rate, which was paid by local taxes.

By 1832, the country was paying ? 7 million per anum to the able bodied poor and topping up low wages, something which the wealthy disagreed with. They argued that this encouraged laziness as a man knew he could work less and receive the same amount of money. They also argued it would have a negative effect on labouring, thus plunging the country into poverty. In 1834 a report was commissioned into bettering the welfare of the poor and reducing the government's expenditure. The findings of this report lead onto the reform of the poor law. The poor law amendment act 1834

Under this new act, the parishes were grouped into unions and each union was to build a workhouse. The unions were prevented from giving outside help to the poor and help was only accessible to those willing to give up their homes and enter the workhouses. The workhouses were deemed the ultimate humiliation to the poor and was meant to act as a deterrent to the able bodied poor. Conditions inside the workhouses were purposely bad and families were split up and sent to different living quarters. They were fed on

basic food rations and children received education within the workhouses in exchange for several hours of daily manual labour.

The workhouses were very unpopular and not all people agreed with the poor law. Richard Oastler referred to the workhouses as ‘prisons’ and several workhouses such as Andover Workhouse were published in the media for their horrific conditions. Charles Dickens also sympathised with the poor stating in his novels that individuals in the workhouse were treated worse than criminals. ‘we have come to this absurd, this dangerous, this monstrous pass, that the dishonest felon is, in respect of cleanliness, order, diet, and accommodation, better provided for, and taken care of, than the honest pauper. Due to this the government set strict rules for the running of the workhouse. They were not always followed however. Conclusion It is evident that this period of history had a profound and ever-changing effect on the society of Britain, which can still be seen today. Many people suffered, sacrificed and fought for the rights to change their circumstances. New innovations and developments meant Britain became an industrial giant, and one of the wealthiest countries of its time. As well as a positive effect, like all things, there is also a negative. For the vast wealth created there were those who were exploited and became destitute.

It can be argued however that this was necessary and without the suffering, progression would not have been possible. -----

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