

Without the work of
women on the home
front, Britain could not
have won the first...

[Life](#), [Home](#)



Throughout the time of the war, women abandoned all aspects of their old lives. Suffragists and suffragettes suspended their campaigns for the vote. Instead they concentrated on setting up unions and leagues to actively encourage men to join the army. For example they published posters urging mothers, sisters, wives, daughters to persuade male family members to sign up. All men who wouldn't sign up were given a white feather, more famously known as the symbol of a coward.

Not only did women concentrate on boosting recruitment; they soon replaced male workers doing dangerous and hard jobs in bad conditions where they were occasionally subjected to abuse. The analysis of the following sources will help to prove or disprove the question. Source A is written by a woman who lived through the war. It explains the work that she did after the war broke out and how much she was paid. The letter was written in 1976 but is a primary source. This means that the source needs careful consideration when deciding if it is reliable.

The woman's memory may not be accurate so it could be inaccurate, exaggerated, or miss placing vital information. The source has a very one-sided view, as the author seems to only note to the positive aspects of her change in career. There is no suggestion of bad conditions, treatment or injuries as many other sources suggest. The source makes the working life of women seem pleasant and enjoyable. However many sources and other information do not agree with this. The source doesn't directly agree with the question as it doesn't show that women were helping Britain win the war but does stress that they were useful.

The source isn't very reliable unless it is used in conjunction with another source to back it up. Source B is part of a book written by Sylvia Pankhurst in 1932. Sylvia was the daughter of Emily Pankhurst who was the founder of suffragettes and Sylvia was a firm follower. Suffragettes wanted the right to vote and used fierce campaigns often ending in violence and riots. They were strong, determined and single-minded women. Sylvia was especially this way. She set up unions to campaign for women's rights. The source, therefore, could be biased and used to persuade people to support and join them.

Even though it was written after the war women still weren't seen equals and needed many people to help support them. The source could therefore be exaggerated to help make the writing more emotive and persuasive. This source is more informative than the one before, it shows us the disadvantages and seems much more like other information that has been published. For example the bad working conditions 'it was common for six or more dope painters to be lying ill'. The source does agree more with the statement than Source A. It suggests that women were putting their lives at risk to help continue industry and help the war continue.

Source C, again, taken from a book, written in 1917 by a factory owner. This source completely contrasts with the previous source. It suggests that 'women prefer factory life'. Being a primary piece of evidence, it may have been used to boost the number of female workers in the factories so may not be entirely reliable. Although the owner will be seeing the everyday work women are doing and how they do it. However this source doesn't tell us

what factory it is. If the factory is in good condition and the women there are working in an enjoyable atmosphere with good pay then they will be obviously enjoying their work.

The source does not tell us the numbers of women that enjoy factory life; it may only be a minority of the workforce. The source lacks in vital information, which could change the whole outlook of the source and has no evidence to prove what it is suggesting. It is hard to find sources that agree with this view unless they are obvious propaganda. The evidence in this source does not really with the statement because it is not proving that women are helping the war and is a biased piece of writing. Source D, on the other hand, is completely different.

It is a photograph taken in a munitions factory during the first world war. It doesn't tell us when during the war the photograph was taken. If it was taken at the start of the war it could mean that it is showing how men's attitudes to women were still very poor. Also there is no suggestion of numbers and how the women themselves feel. No evidence of working conditions is shown. There is evidence to suggest that it is propaganda used to help women join the factories; it shows women doing highly skilled work. But more evidence to disprove this idea.

The women look depressed, unhappy and they are not smiling. Also there is a board at the back, which reads 'when the boys come back we are not going to keep you any longer - girls. ' Suggesting men feel superior and better. This would not help women the workforce. The use of the word 'girls' makes the

women seem young, helpless and insuperior. It could well be used to change male attitudes of women for the worse and may have been made by trade unions that disapproved of female workers. This source defiantly agrees with the statement.

It directly says how women are needed and has photographic proof of women working in the factories. Source E is a poster from the British government produced in 1916. This is undoubtedly propaganda. It was made during the munitions crisis and was made as a part of the DORA scheme. Therefore it is likely the source is biased and used to boost morale. Its main purpose, however, is to persuade the women to join the workforce. It shows a woman of middle class or higher and well dressed. She is young and obviously working as she is wearing an overall.

She looks like she is flying suggesting she is happy, on top of world maybe. This source looks similar to the one featuring Lord Kitchener about recruiting. It is appealing to you like that one by saying 'these women are doing their bit' so why aren't you? But it is reliable even though it is propaganda because it shows that women were needed in factories and as many as possible. Evidence suggests that the government is actively encouraging women showing a change in society against the norm. This source however does have limits. We are not aware of numbers or how women feel about the work.

Or how much they are paid and how hard the work is. But the source fully agrees with the question. It is an essential poster; the government are

saying 'we need help - we need women to solve the munitions crisis'. Source F is written record of the numbers of employed in British industries in 1914 and 1918. The huge increase in transport, manufacturing, civil servants and teachers. Women are going into industries previously dominated by men. The only industry out of the group that decreased was domestic service, an industry that women worked in before the war.

It was long hours with little pay sometimes just(i?? 2 per month and women, as far as we can see from Source A 'hated every minute of it'. This source is useful because it shows how many more women the government employed. There is no suggestion of what the women or government thought though. The source covers the whole period of the war including the time of the munitions crisis and DORA. Many of the women would have been employed because of either or both of these. The source is, therefore very reliable, because it is highly unlikely to be propaganda or biased.

However we do not know when it was published or why it was. The source does agree with the statement, because it proves that the number of women in industries from 1914 - 1918 was a huge increase for example in transport only 18, 200 women were employed in 1914 but by 1918 this number had increased to 117, 200! It shows women were needed to fill the places of men. Source G is an extract from an account of one woman's experiences while working during the First World War. It is a primary piece of evidence as it was written in 1919, just after the war has finished.

The source tells us about what the male employees did to her. It is useful because we get an understanding of men's attitudes to female employees. Many other sources have supported the idea that man's attitudes are changing, they are respecting women and encouraging women. However this source completely disagrees with this. The foreman gave her 'wrong or incomplete directions' and she had 'no tools' to work with yet it was unquestionable to ask to 'borrow from the men. ' The male employees would also treat her badly by drawer being 'nailed up' and 'oil poured over everything in it'.

This source does not, however, tell us whether the boss knew or if he did, whether he did anything or ignored it. Also we do not know if the men's attitudes changed during her experience, as there are no exact dates of events. But the woman does say 'none of the men spoke to me for a long time'. This suggesting that maybe she was eventually accepted. This limits the reliability, although having said that, it does seem to be a reliable source as it was undoubtedly used as propaganda of any sort because it was published after the war had finished.

The evidence from this source disagrees with the statement because it suggests that the men do not need nor want the female employee in their workforce. They seem to be capable without her. Source H is part of an article in *The Engineer* published in August 1915 which makes it a primary piece of evidence. It is praising female workers and sounds surprised 'women can satisfactorily handle much heavier pieces of metal' and are disproving every man who under estimated women 'than had previously been dreamt

of'. It is useful in the sense that it suggests that men's attitudes have changed for the better and the majority of men agree with this. 85 MPs in Parliament agreed to the vote of women.

However we do not know how many people agree with this and there is no proof that it was definitely written by a man. There isn't evidence of what job it is or what the conditions were like. It was written at the start of the munitions crisis, when the government were persuading women to join the workforce. So it is possible that this source taken from a trade journal, was used to show women that people did support them, did believe in them and therefore making women warm to the idea employment. The evidence in this statement does support the statement.

People were realising, even from an early stage, how much effort women were doing in filling the men's shoes and helping the war effort. Source I, published in 1918, is part of a report on Women's Work in wartime. The source shows how women are losing their femininity 'she has discarded her petticoats'. Women's clothes were changing and evolving. People were becoming used to it, it seemed normal to have 'girls at the wheels of the cars'. Women are becoming independent. The source also gives information on other work women did, not just the usual factory industry or munitions.

It suggests women are taking over the job industry in every aspect. The source was written at the end of the war meaning that a lot of men will have gone to fight so female workers were a huge majority. The source seems to be very reliable as there is a lot of information and it does not raise many

queries. However there are no examples of what women have to say but there is a good gist of numbers in this source making it more useful. But there are no exact figures. This source completely agrees with the question. It shows women were employed in jobs in all areas.

Source I, an official war painting titled 'For King and Country' by E. F. Skinner done in 1917. There is frequent evidence in this source to show it could be propaganda. Firstly the title directly gives a patriotic sense of pride in your country and nation. Aimed at women to join the workforce, it shows a munitions factory almost completely dominated by women. They are smiling, working in good conditions with no obvious dangers although this painting was drawn after medical reports were published in 1916 showing the effects of factory working.

It is a very positive painting of the prospect of work. It is an extremely biased painting with no other purpose but to raise the spirits of women. The source is useful because it shows how much effort the government is putting into making propaganda pictures. Although it may not be useful because we get no idea of the down sides of factory life - everything seems so good. This makes the source unreliable because it is a very biased and exaggerated but still reliable in the sense that we can appreciate how much the government wants to keep morale high and spirits up.

The source does agree with the statement for the obvious reason that there is a picture full of female workers near to the end of the war. The majority of sources do agree with the question. Source B, D, E, F, H and I all agree.

Source C does definitely not agree and Sources A and C seem to be in the middle. Many of the sources which support the view that 'without the work of women on the Home Front, Britain could not have won the war. ' Much other information helps to support this; DORA was set up to solve the munitions crisis and it used women to help overcome it.

Suffragettes and suffragists set up many leagues and acts to persuade women to send their male family members to war. It is fair enough to say that without women, nobody would be there to persuade men to go to war, nobody would be there to supply men with ammunitions, and nobody would be there to nurse the injured soldiers. Not only were women coping with this but also had to face the prospect that they would never see their loves ones again. Without the work of women the war for Britain would not have been possible, let alone Britain winning.