

# Women in the Workplace

By: Margaret Simpson

Today is International Women's Day, and on this day, we celebrate our mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. [1] Not that long ago, women had to depend on men for many things. Before the 20th century, women had a very traditional role in British culture. According to Queen Victoria, "Let women be what God intended, a helpmate for man, but with totally different duties." [2] Married women stayed at home, cooked, cleaned and cared for their children. Single women usually worked, but there were only a handful of jobs considered suitable for them to take on, and they often had to work long hours for low pay.

Over a century ago, things started to change. Labour unions started allowing women workers to join. [3] Women in Britain took the right to vote in 1918 so they could make their voices heard by the government, but progress was very slow. If World War II hadn't broken out in 1939, certain developments wouldn't have happened. During the war, women were taking over many of the jobs that men traditionally had because most men had left to fight. This gave women a sense of freedom. For the first

time, many of them were earning a living wage. When the men returned, however, the women were expected to go back to more traditional jobs. [4] They fought to keep their jobs and for gender equality in the workforce. Over the decades following the war, more and more women became educated in types of jobs which were usually only available to men, including engineering, medicine and technology.

Nowadays, things have improved significantly for women around the world. They make up almost half of the workforce and earn nearly the same wages as men. Women own businesses, run companies as CEOs and there are women in positions of power – from mayors to presidents – in many countries. [5]



## Did you Know?

International Women's Day is an official holiday and is celebrated in Kazakhstan every year on 8th March.

a) 10.4.7 Read the text again and fill in the gaps (1-5) with the correct sentences (A-F). One sentence is extra. Which words helped you decide?

b) Listen and check.

- A As a result, there were many strikes in order to earn women more rights in the workplace.
- B Women's rights have certainly come a long way!
- C Gender equality is no longer something we need to worry about.
- D The people in society agreed with her opinion.
- E But it's also a day to look at the past and notice how much has changed for women.
- F A lot of women refused to accept this.

10.6.1 Complete the phrases with: *earn, traditional, pay, power, long*. Use them to make sentences based on the text.

- 1 ..... hours
- 2 ..... role
- 3 positions of .....
- 4 low .....
- 5 ..... rights