

Industrial Revolution: Working Conditions

The Industrial Revolution was a time of great economic and cultural changes. Technological advances changed how things were powered, manufactured, communicated, and transported. As cities became centers of economic opportunity, many people moved from the country to work in factories, mills, and mines. But these new environments and technologies were not always safe. The work was demanding and both living and working conditions in cities of the time were poor and crowded.

Today, most people work about eight hours a day, five days a week. But workers during the Industrial Revolution were expected to work up to twelve hours a day, six days a week. There were no paid vacations or sick days. Workers who were injured on the job were usually fired. Child labor was also common. Children cost less than adult workers. Small children were hired for some jobs because they could fit into places adults couldn't.

Many of the jobs were also dangerous, and there were no safety regulations to protect workers, as there are today. The machines they used were new and lacking in safety features. People operating machinery sometimes lost a finger or a limb. Men working in mines breathed in poor quality air and were in constant danger of being crushed or trapped if the mine collapsed.



Though modern by their own contemporary standards, factory facilities during the Industrial Revolution were not safe. Electricity was a new invention, and lighting was typically poor. There were no HVAC systems to clean or circulate the air, so it was common to breathe in a lot of dust from industrial materials that could make people sick. Some factories manufactured flammable chemicals and workers had to be careful that they did not accidentally cause a fire or an explosion.