



Cost of Living in 1910



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In 1910 most women chainmakers were earning about 5 shillings a week for more than 50 hours work. They had been awarded an increase by the Chain Trade Board, which more than doubled their earnings to 11 shillings a week. Many employers refused to pay, leading to a strike that lasted for several weeks and ended in victory for the chainmakers.

On 15th February 1971 Britain moved from imperial to decimal currency, where £1 = 100p. Before that date money was expressed as pounds (£), shillings (s) and pence (d), where £1 = 20s and 1s = 12d. At the time of changeover, 1 shilling had exactly the same value as 5 new pence and could buy the same quantity of goods. But value changes over time, for example;

8d in 1910 was worth 1s in 1935, 24p in 1971 and £2.27 in 2005

In order to give a better understanding of the value of money at that time the following calculations have been carried out using the Retail Price Index of the Measuring Worth website: www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare

Each amount has been worked out to show its relative value in 2005 and rounded to the nearest pound.

	1910	2005
<u>Income</u>		
Chainmakers' earnings prior to strike	5s per week.	£17 per week
Chainmakers' earnings after strike	11s per week	£37 per week
Strike pay for union members	6s per week	£20 per week
Strike pay for non-union members	4s per week	£14 per week

Some of the donations made to the strike fund

Countess of Beauchamp	£100	£6,799
Countess of Warwick	£25	£1,699
George Cadbury	£5 weekly	£340 weekly
Birmingham Mayor, Arthur Chamberlain	£50 guineas	£3,569
Total amount collected	£4000 +	£271,950 +

Some typical prices

Rent	3s 6d - 5s per week
Loaf of bread	2½d
1 pound butter	1s 2d
1 pound sugar	3d
1 pound tea	1s 6d
20 pounds of potatoes	10d
1 pound cheese	6d
1 pound bacon	9d
1 pound onions	1½d
Dozen eggs	1s
1 pound biscuits	8d
1 pound lard	7d
1 pound jam	5½d
1 pound apples	3d
12 pints milk	3d
1 pound meat	10d
Wrights Coal Tar soap	4d per tablet
Child's boots	2s 11d
Letter post	1d
Swan Vestas matches	1d

Budget of a widow drawing an old age pension of 5s per week, printed in the Woman Worker 1909.

	s	d
Rent	2	3
Pint paraffin	0	1½
14 pounds coal	0	2½
2 ounces tea	0	1
½ pound sugar	0	1½
2 pounds potatoes	0	1
2 pounds mutton	1	0
Half bag flour	0	1
Pint of porter (beer)	0	1¾
Loaf	0	2½
Other items	0	8¼
Total	5	0

Standard working-class family budget of 22s 6d per week in 1904, printed in the Cooperative Wholesale Society People's Year Book, 1922.

	s	d
Bread and Flour	3	7
Meat	4	5½
Fish	0	11¾
Bacon	0	11½

Eggs	1	0
Fresh milk	1	3¼
Cheese	0	6½
Butter	2	1½
Potatoes	0	11
Vegetables and fruit	0	11
Currants and raisins	0	2¾
Rice, tapioca, oatmeal	0	6
Tea	0	1½
Coffee and cocoa	0	3¾
Sugar	0	11
Jam, marmalade, treacle	0	6½
Pickles and condiments	0	3¼
Other items	2	10¼
Total	22	6

Ready-Reckoner (amounts have been rounded)

1910	½d	1d	2d	3d	4d	5d
2005	14p	28p	57p	85p	£1.13	£1.42

1910	6d	7d	8d	9d	10d	11d
2005	£1.70	£1.98	£2.27	£2.55	£2.83	£3.12

1910	1s (12d)	2s	3s	4s	5s	6s
2005	£3.40	£6.80	£10.20	£13.60	£17.00	£20.40

1910	7s	8s	9s	10s	£1 (20 shillings)
2005	£23.80	£27.20	£30.59	£33.99	£67.99