

# The Factory Act

## Teachers' Notes

This worksheet can be completed with or without access to a computer.

Without access to a computer the learner will need a calculator to complete Table 1.

With access to a computer the learner can either design their own spreadsheet (Extension) to do the calculations or use 'The Factory Act' spreadsheet. Teachers may use the latter to check answers for Table 1.

Some information for Classroom Exercise 2.

### CAUSES OF POPULATION GROWTH

1. The death rate began to fall rapidly (most of the time) while the birth rate remained constant. In 1831 the first [cholera](#) epidemic struck Britain; there was a subsequent epidemic in 1847-8. Cholera caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people but the dreadful living conditions in the towns and the poor working conditions had a more far-reaching effect on the death rates.
2. There was an increase in the number of marriages per 1,000 population. The average age of marriage fell and since this meant that couples had more child-bearing years, the birth rate increased.
3. Until about 1870, children were an economic asset. Opportunities for [child employment](#) increased and children could work from an early age. It has been said that couples had large families so that they could send the children out to work and thus supplement the family income. Child employment was gradually restricted by factory and mines legislation, starting in 1833 with the first effective [Factory Act](#) but culminating with the 1870 Education Act.

### DEATH RATES FELL because:

1. medical knowledge improved, especially in the use of anaesthetics and antiseptics, although many of these discoveries came later;
2. the 1848 [Public Health](#) Act enabled town corporations to implement much needed "clean-up" schemes. Although much of the Public Health Act was based on the miasmatic theory (that bad smells caused disease) it did have the right effect, even if for the wrong reasons. Towns were cleaned to remove the bad smells; in so doing, the causes of disease (germs) were also removed;
3. [Factory](#) and [Mines](#) legislation prohibited the use of child labour and reduced working hours, particularly for young persons (those aged between 13 and 18) and adult females; elementary safety codes were made compulsory which reduced accidents to some extent;
4. cheap, fresh food became more readily available after the building of the railways and the introduction of [free trade](#).