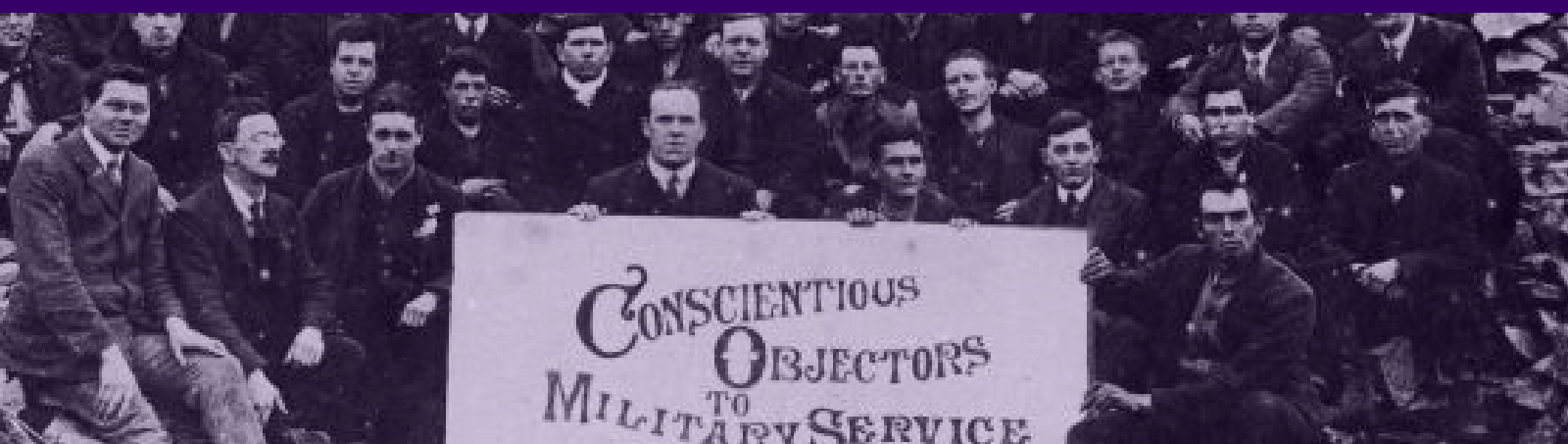


# FACTSHEET EDUCATION FOR PEACE

## Conscientious Objection during WWII



### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION?

Conscientious objection is when someone objects to a course of action on moral, ethical, political or religious grounds. The term is most commonly used in the context of individuals having a conscientious objection to serving in the military. These individuals are called conscientious objectors (COs).



### CONSCRIPTION AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION DURING WWI

Legislation during WWI set a precedent for the introduction of conscription in Britain.



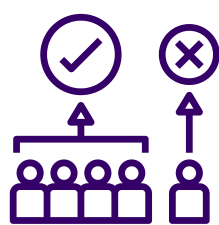
It also set a precedent regarding recognition of conscientious objection, albeit in limited circumstances. Many COs in WWI endured very harsh conditions.

In 1939, on the day Britain declared war on Germany, the National Service (Armed Forces) Act was passed, which made all males between 18 and 41 liable for conscription.



There were some exemptions on those who were:

- medically unfit
- in key industries and jobs
- conscientious objectors if their reasons for refusing to join up were accepted by a tribunal.



Men aged 20 to 23 had to register in 1939, men over 27 in 1940 and men over 40 in 1941.



In 1942 the List of people who could be conscripted was extended to include unmarried women and childless widows between 20 and 30, and men up to 51.

### HOW MANY CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS WERE THERE DURING THE WWII?



During WWI about 62,000 men and approximately 1,000 women in Britain applied for CO status.

As an approximate comparison, around 20,000 men refused conscription into the British Army between 1916 and the end of the First World War

This factsheet is one of a series produced by Conscience Education for Peace. They are available, together with videos and other resources at [consciencecampaign.org.uk](http://consciencecampaign.org.uk)

