Introduction – Prior to 1918, when limited suffrage was granted to women, there was a determined campaign to raise the issue of Votes for Women. Tired of being treated as 2nd class citizens, expected to be dutiful wives and mothers, many women put forward the case that women should be granted the vote and should be regarded as equals. Many factors contributed to the eventual decision to grant women the vote; Changing attitudes in society, the work of the Suffragists, the Suffragettes, Women’s war work and the example of foreign countries. Argument 1 – It was pre-war campaigns from the Suffragettes and Suffragists that raised awareness and were pivotal. Argument 2 – It was long-term changes in attitudes towards women that led to the vote being granted. Argument 3 – It was the work carried out by women during the war that convinced MPs that they deserved the vote.

Factor 2 =

**NUWSS (Suffragists)**

K – The Suffragists carried out a peaceful, legal campaign to convince politicians and the public of the merits of women’s suffrage. They held meetings, wrote to and met MPS, organised petitions and distributed pamphlets.

A – By acting in a responsible manner, it can be argued that the Suffragists were successful in convincing MPs to support their cause. The fact that many MPs who voted the Representation of the People Act into law in 1918 were lobbied by the Suffragists would support this.

K – Between 1910 and 1912, Parliament heard debates on the merits of giving the vote to women. These were known as the Conciliation Bills.

A – The fact that the issue was debated shows the impact of the Suffragists. Some have argued that given time, Parliament would have passed the bill.

CA – However, the Suffragists were unable to convince the Government to support suffrage, as the defeat of the Conciliation Bills proves. Their peaceful tactics could be ignored and they received limited and unflattering media attention.

Evaluation – The Suffragists paved the way for women’s suffrage. Their long campaign had convinced a number of politicians to support their cause, and the war delayed, rather than speeded up, votes for women. H – Horton - ‘Suffragists were vital in securing the strong position enjoyed by the cause at the outbreak of war’.

Or

The Suffragists tried and failed before the war. The fact that the Suffragettes felt the need to form their own group and the increased attention they were able to generate suggests that the Suffragists impact was not a conclusive factor.

Factor 1 =

**Changing Attitudes in Society**

K – Women began to gain greater legal and economic rights. 1882 Married Women’s Property Act gave women rights over property. Colleges, such as Girton College, were established for women and the 1880 Education Act guaranteed girls primary education. More women were now able to train and work as doctors, teachers and lawyers.

A – This was crucial as it indicated that society was beginning to view women as capable and equal. As women were now able to gain a better education and enter respected professions, it was easier to put forward the case that they deserved to be able to vote. However, many men still believed in the Victorian ideal of the women as ‘angel in the house’.

K – During the 19th century, women became more involved in political life. They joined political parties, could vote in local elections and could stand for election to school boards and county councils.

A- An argument can therefore be put forward that by taking part in local politics, women were able to convince MPs that the next logical step was to allow them to be involved in national politics.

Evaluation – The gradual shift in women’s position in society added great weight to the argument for votes for women. H – Kerr - ‘The overall effect of these developments was to erode male prejudices’.

Or

Whilst there had been a change in women’s legal and economic status, it had not convinced politicians to act pre-1900. Therefore it would take the direct campaigning of other groups such as the Suffragettes and Suffragists to put their case across more forcefully.

Factor 4 =

**Women’s War Work**

K – When Britain went to war, the WSPU suspended their campaign. Women made a huge contribution to the war effort. 950,000 women worked in munitions factories, the Women’s Land Army kept agriculture going, and women were crucial in running transport at home.

A – Therefore it has been suggested that women’s war work was vital. Women, instead of being subjected to frequent criticism in the press and by public figures, were very generally praised.   Public opinion became overwhelmingly favourable towards women.

K – In 1918, women were given the vote for the first time. Some politicians suggested that they had ‘earned it’ through their war work.

CA – However, it must be remembered that only women over 30 were given the vote and the very women who had helped in the war effort – the young women of the munitions factories – were actually denied the vote. This suggests that the war had a limited impact.

Evaluation – The war was a vital factor in winning votes for women as it gave politicians a popular mandate to grant the vote. It forced them to confront the issue of suffrage anyway as many servicemen were not entitled to vote. H – Taylor- ‘War smoothed the way for democracy – it is one of the few things that can be said in its favour’.

Or

It was changes in government, not the war that was more important in gaining votes for women. Bartley - ‘Several suffragist MPs were promoted to the Cabinet.   More importantly Lloyd George, who was sympathetic to women’s suffrage, replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in December 1916.’

Factor 3 =

**WSPU (Suffragettes)**

K – The Suffragettes, under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst, carried out a militant campaign in order to put forward the case of votes for women. They held meetings and published a newspaper, but they also committed violent acts such as arson, breaking windows, heckling MPs and attacking art galleries.

A – An argument can therefore be made that the WSPU dragged the issue of Votes for Women into the spotlight. They gained a huge amount of attention and ensured that their cause could not be ignored.

CA – However, the violence of their campaign alienated politicians and the public. They were ridiculed by the press, and a number of MPs felt that the militant campaign proved the inability of women to act rationally. In addition, the membership of the WSPU dropped as they became more violent, indicating that they were losing support.

K – In prison, Suffragettes who had gone on hunger strike were forcibly fed. This was a brutal and unpopular procedure.

A- The government’s actions generated huge sympathy for the Suffragettes. Their bravery and determination convinced men and women of the validity of their cause.

Evaluation – The Suffragettes provided the publicity that the cause needed. H – Mackenzie - ‘The Suffragettes revitalised the question of votes for women before 1914’. The prospect of their campaign resuming after the war also convinced politicians to grant the vote to women.

Or

The Suffragettes gained publicity, but failed to convince MPs to support them. They could not be seen to be giving in to violent demands. Pugh - ‘The only positive impact of the Suffragettes was to increase the membership of the Suffragists’.

Conclusion

Try to split your conclusion into two sections, which should mirror the argument that you have mentioned in your introduction. The second section should be the viewpoint that you agree with. Make sure that you refer back to the question and answer it.

On one hand it can clearly be argued that the long term-changes in society were the most significant reason in winning the vote for women. As women gained more legal, economic and political influence, they were able to put forward a more persuasive case for being granted the vote.

However, the case for women’s work being the most important is also compelling. They were able to win the admiration of the public and politicians, and earned the right to vote, even if not all women were recognised in 1918.

Overall, it should be argued that it was the combined efforts of the Suffragettes and Suffragists were most significant in winning votes for women. They raised awareness of the issue, gained public sympathy and convinced politicians of their argument. Without their tireless campaigning, the vote would have been delayed for even longer.

Factor 5 =

**The example of other countries**

K – Prior to 1918, a number of countries had granted the vote to women. These included Finland (1906) and New Zealand (1893). The political systems in these countries had remained stable.

A – This was significant as it spurred on some British politicians to support female suffrage. They viewed Britain as the greatest democracy and did not want to be overtaken by other countries.

A- The fact that women had been granted the vote across the world also inspired British campaigners and encouraged them to continue their campaign.

A- However, there is no record of MPs citing the example of other countries as key in their decision to pass the Representation of the People Act.

Evaluation – The example of foreign countries paved the way for British politicians to grant women the vote. H – Bartley - ‘It would have been an embarrassment if the mother of democracy, Britain, had lagged behind other countries’.

Or

British politicians were more concerned by the key events within their own country, such as the Suffragette campaign and the war. It was these dramatic influences that were more important than the example of other countries.