

# What were Nazi attitudes and policies towards women?

History - Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1919 - 1939

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## How did the ideal woman in Nazi Germany look and behave?

The Nazis wanted women to have very **natural look**. They wanted women to have **blonde hair**, but not dyed, and hairstyles should be simple, like tied back, wearing it in plaits or styling it in a bun. As part of this natural look, the ideal woman in Nazi Germany also **wouldn't wear makeup**. Women in Nazi Germany were expected to wear **traditional clothing** including **long skirts and flat shoes**. They were not encouraged to wear trousers or high heels. The Nazis also had an ideal body type and shape which a woman's body should be. The Nazis wanted women in Germany to have **wider hips** as this was meant to be good for carrying children during pregnancy. Therefore it was **frowned upon for women to slim down** as this was seen as bad for childbearing. Hitler also had opinions on how women should behave within Nazi Germany. **Women within Nazi Germany were not expected to drink alcohol or smoke.**



## What were Nazi attitudes and policies in terms of employment?

Women in Nazi Germany were not expected to work and were actively encouraged to give up any job which they already had. This was to allow women to spend their time within the home, raising a family. One of the main methods used by the Nazis to encourage women to leave their jobs was by using **propaganda**, in particular **posters and speeches**. **Hitler's** speech at the **Nuremberg Rally** in 1934 is an example of **propaganda** being used to push this agenda. Posters were also used to create ideas within people's minds about how women should act and what role they should play within Nazi Germany.



From 1933 female **doctors, civil servants** and **teachers** were banned from their profession and by the end of 1934 approximately **360,000 women had left their employment.** From 1936 women could no longer become **judges and lawyers.** Girls were also discouraged from going to university or continuing their education to a higher level by gaining qualifications needed for professional careers. This resulted in **the number of women starting in higher education falling to 6,000 in 1939 from 17,000 women in 1932!**



## What were Nazi attitudes and policies in terms of marriage and the family?

Hitler believed that the role of a woman within Germany was to become housewives and concentrate on the 'three K's' - Kinder (children), Küche (kitchen) and Kirche (church). The number of children being born in Germany was decreasing, **between 1900 and 1933 the number of births each year had fallen by 50%**. The Nazis wanted to change this and **increase the birth rate** within Germany because more babies being born will lead to more workers and soldiers in the future. **Hitler** made changes to the law to encourage marriage and the birth of children, in particular **Aryan** children. The **Aryan** race refers to people of European descent who are often born with **blonde hair** and **blue eyes**. The Nazis viewed **Aryans** as the superior race.



In 1933 the **Law for the Encouragement of Marriage** was introduced to try and encourage young people within Germany to marry. People were given a loan of **1,000 marks** (German currency) which was roughly **8 months wages**. For each child a couple had, **250 marks were removed** from the amount still owed on the loan. So German couples who had 4 children were then free from paying back this loan! There was another condition to this loan, people were only able to receive this loan if the wife left her job and stopped working. Another policy used to encourage childbirth and a way to increase the **Aryan** population was the **Lebensborn programme**. This was created by the leader of the **SS**, **Heinrich Himmler**, in 1935, and it encouraged **single women**, with **Aryan** qualities, to have children with **SS** men. These children would then be given to German families who were considered to be good homes to raise these **Aryan** children in. Between 1938 and 1941, one facility saw over 540 of these women give birth as part of the **Lebensborn programme**.



The Nazis also encouraged women to increase the number of children they had by giving an award called the **Mother's Cross** to women based on the number of children they had. Women were given a **bronze medal** for having **4-5 children**, a **silver medal** for **6-7 children** and a **gold medal** for **8 or more** children! This medal was seen as a sign to be respected, with **Hitler Youth** members saluting the wearer of a **gold medal** to show respect and their importance within Nazi Germany. The medals were awarded **every year** on **Hitler's** mother's birthday on **August 12th**. Between 1938 and 1944 approximately **4.7 million medals** had been awarded.



# Glossary

**Aryan** - People of European descent who are often born with blonde hair and blue eyes. The Nazis viewed Aryans as the superior race.

**Kinder** - German word for children.

**Küche** - German word for kitchen.

**Kirche** - German word for church.

**Marks** - German currency (money).

**Propaganda** - Methods used to create ideas. It controls attitudes by putting ideas into people's minds.

