

History, Weimar and Nazi Germany

Lesson 26

**How successful were Nazi policies towards women?**

Miss Shanks



## How successful were Nazi policies towards women?

There are several reasons why Nazi policies towards women could be regarded as a success. The number of **marriages increased by over 2,000** and between 1933 and 1936 the **number of married women in employment decreased**. The **birth rate also increased** from 14 births per 1,000 people in 1933 to 20 births per 1,000 people in 1939. Additionally, the **German Women's Enterprise** proved to be successful, with membership reaching **6 million members**. This organisation arranged courses and trained women in domestic skills which would be necessary in their roles as housewives and mothers.



However, it could be argued that Nazi policies towards women were not entirely successful and had some limitations. Some women within Nazi Germany **resented being forced out of the jobs** in professions such as teaching, medicine and the law. Furthermore, some Nazi policies were **changed due to the war effort** and women were now needed to work in industry. In 1937 women with marriage loans were **allowed to go back to work** and many **employers preferred female workers as they were cheaper** to employ than men. Women's wages were still **33% lower than male wages**. This resulted in the number of women in employment **increasing from 4.84 million in 1933 to 7.14 million in 1939**.



## **Interpretation 1 - By a historian writing about the early 1930s.**

Nazi policies towards women were hugely successful. Hitler was focused on increasing the German population and created policies which would encourage women to become housewives and mothers. This proved effective as the number of marriages, and the birth rate, both increased during the Nazi period. The Nazis even managed to reduced the number of married women who were employed between 1933 and 1936, there is no doubt that their policies towards women worked.



## **Interpretation 2 - By an economic historian.**

By 1936 the Nazis had to adapt their policies due to international tensions and the possibility of an imminent war. Nazi policies towards women before 1936 were focused on reducing the number of women in employment and preparing them for domestic roles. However, between 1933 and 1939 the number of women in employment actually increased; this is partly because women were cheap labour. This highlights a tension between Nazi ideology and the reality of the labour market.



# Glossary

**Interpretation** - An interpretation of history is created by a historian and is based on sources. It is their opinion or judgement of an event, which can vary between historians for several reasons.

**Sources** - These are historical documents from the time of the event. For example, this could be propaganda posters, first hand accounts or photographs.



# Interpretation Questions

1. What does Interpretation 2 suggest about Nazi policies towards women?
2. What evidence does the interpretation use to support their argument?
3. How can you support this evidence from your own knowledge?
4. Why do you think interpretation 1 and interpretation 2 give different views about Nazi policies towards women?
5. **Challenge question:** Which Interpretation do you agree with the most? Use your own knowledge to help you explain your reasons why.

*P - I agree with Interpretation ... more than Interpretation ...*

*E - This is because it states ...*

*E - This links to my own knowledge because ...*

*L - Therefore, I agree with Interpretation ... more than ...*

