

The Economic and Social Status of the Jewish Population (1933 / 1939)

Abstract

This table shows the economic sectors in which Jewish workers were employed in the German Reich in 1933 and 1939, both in absolute figures and proportionally, and in comparison to the distribution of the total workforce. The figures for the year 1939 were based on the territory of the German Reich on December 31, 1939, i.e. before its territorial expansion through the “Anschluss” of Austria and the annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938.

In 1933, more than half of the Jewish workforce (61.2 percent) was employed in the commerce and trade sectors. However, these figures refer to the results of the 1933 census, the cut-off date for which was June 16. At this time, many Jews had already lost their jobs in the public sector due to the antisemitic “Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service,” which was passed on April 7, 1933. The statistics therefore do not reflect the employment situation shortly before or at the time when the National Socialists came to power in January 1933.

The share of Jews in the total population was around 0.8 percent in 1933, falling to around 0.3 percent by 1939. The share of Jewish workers in the workforce was not proportional to this. In 1933, Jews made up 0.74 percent of the workforce, but by 1939 this figure had fallen to just 0.09 percent. As a result of a series of antisemitic restrictions and laws, Jewish people were increasingly pushed out of the workforce from 1933 onwards.

Source

Economic Sector ^{a)}	1933				1939 ^{b)}			
	Total Working Population	Jewish Working Population	As a Percentage of the Jewish Working Population	As a Percentage of the Total Working Population	Total Working Population	Jewish Working Population	As a Percentage of the Jewish Working Population	As a Percentage of the Total Working Population
	%	1000	%	%	%	1000	%	%
Agriculture	28.9	4.2	1.7	0.04	25.9	3.0	8.9	0.03
Industry and handicrafts	40.4	55.7	23.1	0.43	42.2	11.5	33.7	0.08
Commerce and trade	18.5	147.3	61.2	2.48	17.5	6.5	19.1	0.11
Public and private sectors	8.3	30.0 ^{c)}	12.5	1.11	10.5	8.6	25.2	0.24

Domestic work	3.9	3.4	1.4	0.27	3.9	4.5	13.1	0.33
	100	240.6	100	0.74	100	34.1	100	0.09

a) The categorization of economic sectors was slightly altered in 1939. The comparability of data has not been affected, however.

b) Based on the borders as of December 31, 1937.

c) At the time the census was taken (June 16, 1933) many Jews had already left public service. Thus, this figure does not reflect the situation at the time of Hitler's seizure of power, which is mostly the case for the other professions.

Source: *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch*, Volume III, *Materialien zur Statistik des Deutschen Reiches 1914–1945*, edited by Dietmar Petzina, Werner Abelshäuser, and Anselm Faust. Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1978, pp. 134.

Translation: Frederick Reuss

Recommended Citation: The Economic and Social Status of the Jewish Population (1933 / 1939), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:document-4387>> [March 16, 2026].