

History

[Art & Culture](#), [American Dream](#)



In the 1920s, many Americans were trying to achieve the infamous "American Dream." The dream was to be rich, successful, happy, and one of the social elites. However, even though this was the dream for Americans in the 1920s, the general standard has changed over the years into the present time. Since the 1920s, the dream of putting a high emphasis on an individualistic and materialistic life has evolved into a present day dream of working hard, holding a well-paying job, and raising a family. The 1920s was an era of declined social and moral values, as shown by its increased pursuit of pleasure. When World War I ended in 1918, the young Americans who had fought the war became deeply disillusioned, as the battles that they had just fought in made the Victorian social morality of the early 1920s seem like hypocrisy. This caused those that had fought in the war to not care as much about upholding traditional morals. Also, since World War I was the "war to end all wars," Americans were quite optimistic during the 1920s. The uncontrolled satisfaction that led to self-indulgent parties and wild jazz music resulted ultimately in the corruption of the American dream, as the uninhibited desire for pleasure exceeded other, less important goals. Americans' pursuit of pleasure in the 1920s resulted ultimately in a decline in values. Many of the values of today's dream are similar to those of the 1920s. The dream today does consist of pleasure and happiness. However, the dream of the 1920s was to put a much stronger emphasis on it than today's dream does. The values and morals today are also more widely accepted by the general public. An example of this is women wearing bathing suits to a public beach. In the 1920s, it was bad enough that those bathing suits were even the least bit revealing. Today, however, it is

perfectly acceptable for women to wear bikinis to a public beach, which are much more revealing than those of the 1920s. This is because the standard has gradually changed over time. Many of the values of the 1920s were extremely new and deviated from the norm greatly. The “ new” values crashed right into the 1920s with the emergence of the flapper, a new generation of women who bobbed their hair, wore short skirts, and listened to jazz music. People had no time to adapt to these values. On the other hand, the values of the modern American dream were gradually incorporated. Americans today have been around these values long enough that they are now accustomed to them. During the 1920s, family life was both similar and different than it is now. Advancements in industrial production and technology enabled ordinary Americans to acquire what once had been unattainable luxuries, such as automobiles. These luxuries that were part of everyday family life in the 1920s are still part of the dream today. There are, however, differences between family life of the 1920s and modern family life. In the 1920s, husbands were the “ breadwinners” for their families. While the men were at work, their wives cooked, cleaned, and looked after the home. Wives also did most of the raising of the children. Women in the 1920s did hold jobs, but that was something more for young, single women. Married women typically did not obtain a job because it would cause them to take their focus off of taking care of their family. The dream today is that both men and women perform equal shares of raising the family. Instead of just the men holding jobs, women also hold jobs today. Instead of just the women caring for the home and children, men also take part. Through these efforts, Americans can hope to achieve the part of the

dream of raising a family. Throughout the 1920s, Americans went on a spending spree. The rise of the stock market led to a sudden increase in the national wealth and created a society full of materialism. People began to consume and spend more than ever, and they had the idea that money and popularity would solve everything. A person from any social background could, potentially, strike a fortune. Speculators and industrialists who achieved the American dream in the 1920s of "getting rich" were labeled the "new money." The aristocracy disliked the new money. The so-called "old money," families that had always had money that was passed down from generation to generation, felt that the "get rich quick" ways of earning money were not as fulfilling as the traditional ways. Today, money is valued differently than it was in the 1920s. The dream is not centered so much around money as it used to be. Yes, money is still just as important, but people nowadays keep other goals in mind other than just earning money. The dream today consists of having a job that pays well and that is enjoyable, not just a job that only pays well. Another part of the American dream that women had in the 1920s was equal rights with men. The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which allowed women the right to vote, helped them come even closer to having equal rights with men. In the dream today, women seem to not be as concerned about women's rights as they did in the 1920s. This is due to the fact that most of the work that needed to be done has already been done, such as the women's rights movement and the ratification of the nineteenth amendment. Today, on average, women earn 77 cents for every dollar that men earn. Women still hold far less ownership, CEO, and other high positions within companies than

men. These two facts are evidence that work still remains in the struggle for equal rights for women. However, women definitely came a long way and it is only a matter of time before they are equal with men, for most of the work has already been done. In the 1920s, there seems to have been an American dream that everyone was trying to achieve. Many people looked and some still do look toward this as a model for their own individual American dreams. However, even though this might have been the dream for many Americans in the 1920s, the general standard sure has changed over the years into the present time. Since the 1920s, the dream of putting a high emphasis on "materialistic" life has evolved into a present day dream of working hard, holding a well-paying job, and raising a family.