Wants are relative. As people's incomes rise, they desire more and new kinds of goods and services. Rapidly rising incomes in the United States in the postwar period have brought new levels of demand for cars, toys, clothes, pleasure boats, entertainment, education, and hundreds of other goods and services. Almost overlooked in this plethora of consumer wants has been a major increase in Americans' demand for an item not ordinarily listed among goods and services — privacy. By "privacy" we mean the occupancy by an individual or a nuclear family of a separate dwelling unit not shared with other relatives or nonrelatives.

The typical modern American apparently puts a high value on having a separate dwelling unit, into which he can retreat with his wife, if he has one, and his minor children but no one else, and close the door. He is reluctant to share a dwelling with relatives outside his nuclear family or to live as a roomer or boarder in the household of a nonrelative. Since World War II, Americans have expressed these preferences by using part of their rising income to buy privacy. At all age levels, individuals and nuclear families have succeeded in obtaining not only more housing and better housing but housing separate from other people.

Privacy can be identified statistically as the proportion of households containing only one person or one nuclear family. Changes in the proportion of persons over 14 (or over 18) reported to the census as "head" or "wife of head" of the household also reflect changes in privacy.

* Revision of a paper presented at the meetings of the Population Association of America, April 23, 1965.
Older persons and persons just beginning adult life are the individuals most likely to play a key role in determining the privacy standards achieved by families. The ability of young adults to set up their own households and of older persons to maintain their own households determines how much privacy all generations will experience. This discussion of privacy examines the living patterns of those age groups.

THE CHANGING HOUSEHOLD STATUS OF THE YOUNG

A marked increase in the proportion of young men who were heads of households occurred between 1940 and 1960. In 1940, only one in five men aged 20-24 headed his own household; by 1960, two in five were household heads. In 1940, just over half the men aged 25-29 headed households; by 1960, the fraction had risen to three-quarters.

The proportionate increases in household heads were balanced by reductions in the proportion of young men living in the households of others. Men in their twenties were much less likely in 1960 than in 1940 to be living in their parents' households as "children of the head." They were also less likely to be grandchildren or other relatives of the head, although neither of these categories was large even in 1940. The proportion of men in their twenties living as nonrelatives of the head (lodgers or resident employees) also decreased between 1940 and 1960.

In the household population, the only category which showed an increase for young men was that of "head." Outside the household population, however, the "group quarters" population also showed an increase. For ages 15-24, the proportion of men in group quarters rose substantially, reflecting an increase in college enrollment and military service, as well as a shift in the method of enumerating college students. (In 1960, college students living in dormitories were enumerated at college. In 1940, an attempt was made to include them in their parental families.)

The household status of young women likewise altered radically over the two decades. Like men, women in their twenties were far less likely to be living as "children of the head" in 1960 than in 1940 and somewhat less likely to be other relatives, lodgers, or resident employees. But the major shift for women was not toward household headship. Although the proportion of young women who were household heads did rise, the position of household head was still rare for a young woman in 1960. The big increase between 1940 and 1960 was in the proportion of young women who were wives of heads. Some increase in the proportion of young women in group quarters also occurred at ages 15-24.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF THE YOUNG IN 1885

Before examining in greater detail the shifts since 1940 in the living arrangements of the young, it would be useful to know whether the changes are recent or part of a long trend. Unfortunately, national data on household relationships are not available before 1940. For earlier years, it is necessary to turn to state censuses.

The Massachusetts census of 1885 is rich in detail on relationship to the head of the household, and from it information can be extracted and compared with 1940 and 1960 Census data for Massachusetts. No inference should be drawn, of course, that the intervening years lay on a smooth trend line. There may have been ups and downs in the interim.

A dramatic change did occur between 1885 and 1960 in household relationships of young adults in Massachusetts, but most of the change seems to have taken place since 1940, as shown in Table 1. In 1960, over half the male population 20-29 had achieved the status of household head, compared with slightly more than

1 U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, PC(1)-1D, Table 183.