

Chapter Summary

Section 1: An Economic Boom

The economy boomed as soldiers returned from the war, married, and started families. The GI Bill helped millions with home loans and education. Truman faced labor difficulties and addressed discrimination. Eisenhower presided over a time of prosperity.

Section 2: A Society on the Move

Americans moved to the suburbs. A “car culture” developed, leading to funding for the interstate highway system. The Sunbelt offered new jobs as the economy shifted focus to the service sector. Educational opportunities expanded, making college more accessible.



Chapter Summary (continued)

Section 3: Mass Culture and Family Life

Consumer spending soared as incomes rose and businesses offered payment plans and credit cards. A more traditional view of family life took hold. Television and rock-and-roll shaped the emerging national culture.

Section 4: Dissent and Discontent

Social critics rejected the conformity of middle-class suburban society. Cities declined as middle-class families moved to the suburbs, taking tax dollars and political clout with them. Urban and rural poverty threatened many. Minorities faced discrimination in housing and employment.

Objectives

- Describe how the United States made the transformation to a peacetime economy.
- Discuss the accomplishments of Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower.
- Analyze the 1950s economic boom.



Terms and People

- **demobilization** – sending home members of the army
- **GI Bill of Rights** – eased the return of World War II veterans by providing education and employment aid
- **baby boom** – increase in births between 1945 and 1964

Terms and People (continued)

- **productivity** – the rate at which goods are produced or services performed
- **Taft-Hartley Act** – a law that restricted the power of labor unions; outlawed the closed shop, a workplace in which only union members can be hired
- **Fair Deal** – President Truman's program to expand New Deal reforms



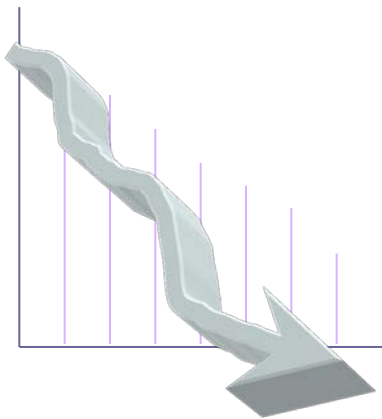
How did the nation experience recovery and economic prosperity after World War II?

The GI Bill of Rights and a strong demand for consumer goods – coupled with defense spending on the Korean War and increased foreign demand for U.S. goods – greatly improved the economy.

The U.S became the richest country in the world.

After World War II, many citizens and economists feared the country would fall into a widespread depression.

- Truman started **demobilization**, and millions of soldiers came home and searched for work.
- Contracts to produce military goods were cancelled and millions of defense workers lost their jobs.
- An end to rationing and price controls – plus a demand for goods – fueled inflation.



The post-war U.S. did not experience unemployment or a renewed depression, but it did have serious economic problems.

The most painful was skyrocketing prices.

Prices rose about 18 percent in 1946, and the prices of some products doubled.

To help veterans, the federal government enacted the **GI Bill of Rights**.

Benefit	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bill provided one year of unemployment pay for veterans unable to find work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pay helped veterans support themselves and their families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bill provided financial aid to attend college. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight million veterans entered or returned to college.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bill entitled veterans to loans for buying homes and starting businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was an upsurge in home construction, which led to explosive growth in suburban areas.

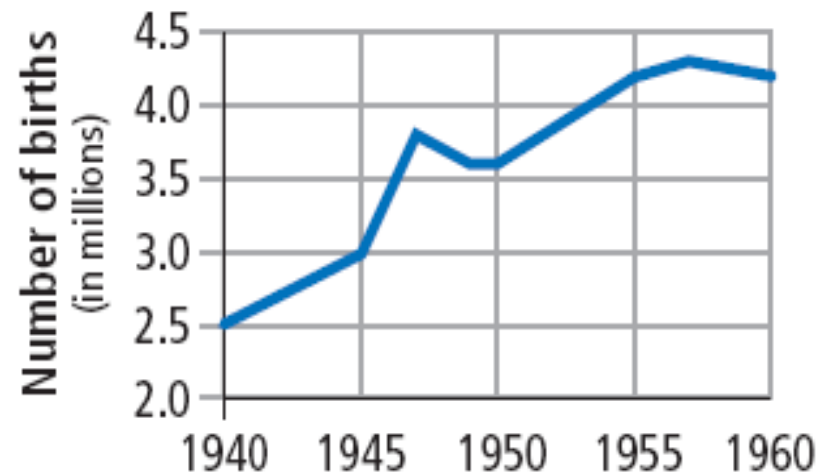
With the Great Depression and the war behind them, many returning soldiers quickly married and started families.



The result was a postwar **baby boom**.

Between 1940 and 1955, the U.S. population experienced its greatest increase, growing 27 percent from about 130 to about 165 million.

Birthrate, 1940–1960



SOURCE: *Historical Statistics of the United States*

When wartime restrictions ended, demand for consumer goods soared. Businesses employed more people to produce goods.

This created a cycle—

People bought
new goods

Businesses hire
more workers

The postwar years ushered in a period of domestic prosperity that lasted nearly 20 years.

The U.S. became the richest country in the world.

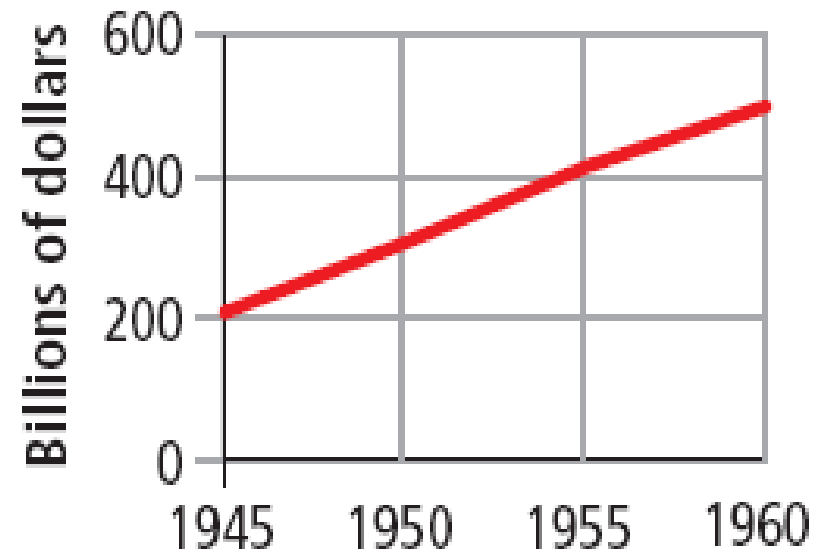
During the postwar period, the U.S. economy benefitted from technological advances, such as atomic power, computers, and plastics.

Worker **productivity** continued to improve, largely because of new technology.

The economy also got a boost from federal defense spending for the Korean War and from foreign demand for U.S. goods caused by the Marshall Plan.

Between 1945 and 1960, the nation's gross national product (GNP) **more than doubled**.

U.S. GNP, 1945–1960



SOURCE: USInfo.State.Gov

President Harry Truman had to preside over one of the more difficult times in American history.

- The **Cold War** was beginning and there were **communist takeovers** in Europe and Asia.
- The U.S. faced **inflation and labor unrest** at home.

Trade unionists demanded pay increases to keep up with inflation.

Employers refused to meet labor's demands.

Millions of steel, coal, railroad, and automotive workers went on strike, prompting Congress to enact the **Taft-Hartley Act** over Truman's veto.

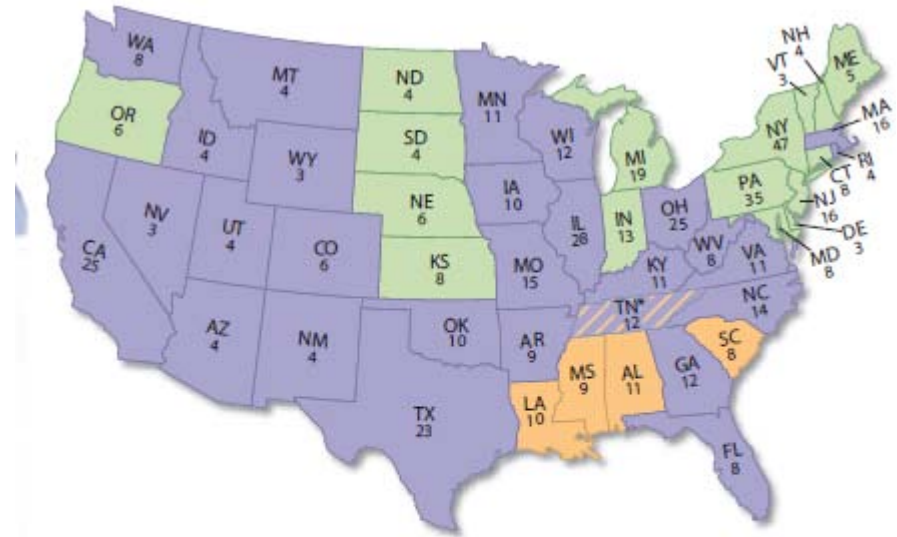
Truman established a **special committee on civil rights** to investigate race relations.

The committee made several recommendations for reforms, **but Congress rejected them all.**

Truman desegregated the military, which did not need Congressional approval.

By spring 1948, Truman's standing had sunk so low that few thought he could win election that fall.

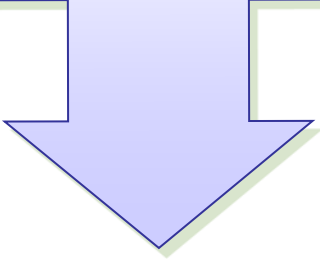
However, Truman managed the political upset of the century, beating three other candidates, two of them from new political parties.



Candidate (Party)	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote	% Electoral Vote	% Popular Vote
Truman (Democratic)	303	24,105,182	57	50
Dewey (Republican)	189	21,970,065	36	46
Thurmond (States' Rights)	39	1,169,063	7	2
Wallace (Progressive)	—	1,157,172	—	2

*One of Tennessee's electors voted for Thurmond

Shortly after the election, Truman announced a far-ranging legislative program he called the **Fair Deal**.



- The Fair Deal was meant to strengthen existing New Deal reforms and establish new programs, such as national health insurance.
- But Congress rejected most of Truman's Fair Deal proposals.

Legislative failure and a stalled war in Korea contributed to Truman's loss of popularity, and he did not seek reelection in 1952.

Popular, charming Republican candidate **Dwight D. Eisenhower** won the presidency that year, beating Democrat **Adlai Stevenson**.

The public believed that Eisenhower would walk the line between liberal and conservative political positions, and he did not disappoint.

Eisenhower created an interstate highway system and spent more money on education.



The strong U.S economy went a long way toward making his presidency one of the most prosperous, peaceful, and politically tranquil in the 20th century.

Objectives

- Examine the rise of the suburbs and the growth of the Sunbelt.
- Describe changes in the U.S. economy and education in the postwar period.



Terms and People

- **Interstate Highway Act** – 1956 law that authorized the spending of \$32 billion to build 41,000 miles of highway
- **Sunbelt** – name given to the region of states in the South and the Southwest
- **service sector** – businesses that provide services rather than manufactured goods

Terms and People (continued)

- **information industry** – businesses that provide informational services
- **franchise business** – to allow a company to distribute its products or services through retail outlets owned by independent operators
- **multinational corporation** – companies that produce and sell their goods and services all over the world

Terms and People (continued)

- **AFL-CIO** – in 1955, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) labor unions united
- **California Master Plan** – called for three tiers of higher education: research universities, state colleges, and community colleges, all of which were to be accessible to all of the state's citizens

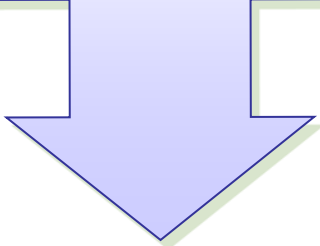


What social and economic factors changed American life during the 1950s?

After World War II, many Americans migrated to the Sunbelt states and to newly built suburbs.

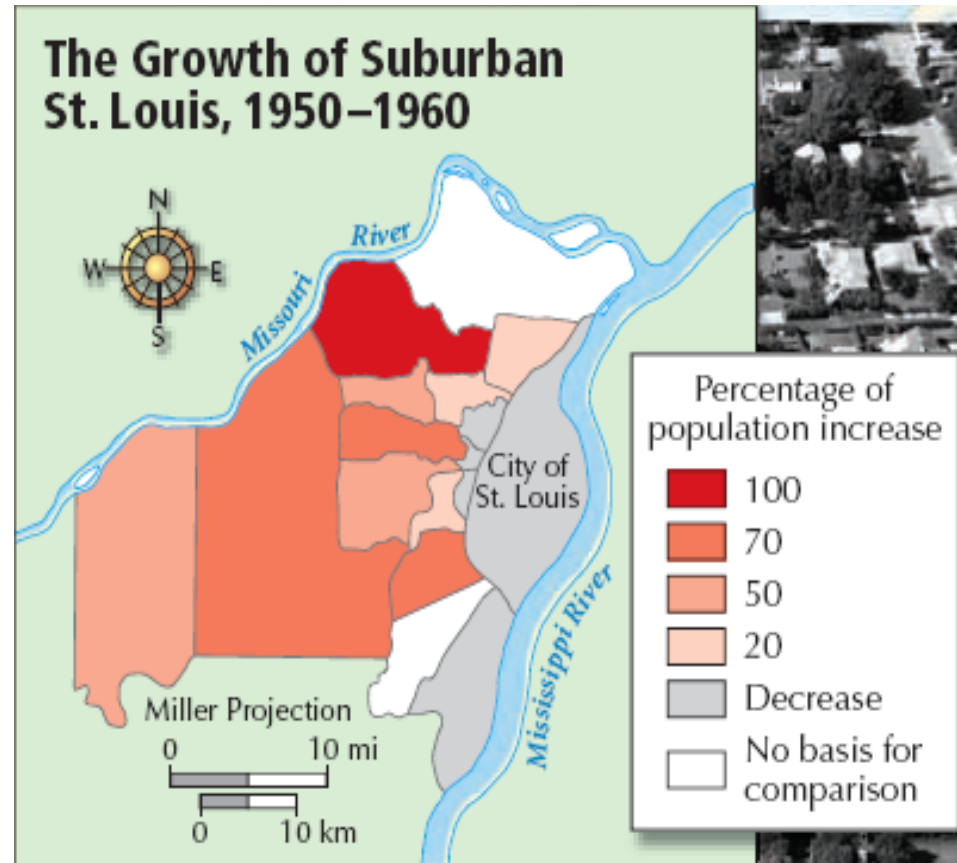
White-collar jobs began to replace blue-collar jobs in the U.S. economy, more women joined the workforce, and franchise businesses and multinational corporations were on the rise.

Between 1940 and 1960, 40 million Americans moved to the suburbs, one of the largest mass migrations in history.



- Because few houses were built during the war, the U.S. had a **severe shortage of urban housing**.
- **Newly married veterans** who needed housing looked to the suburbs.

Rural regions and older industrial cities suffered dramatic declines in population.



At this time of peak demand, developers began to quickly build affordable housing.



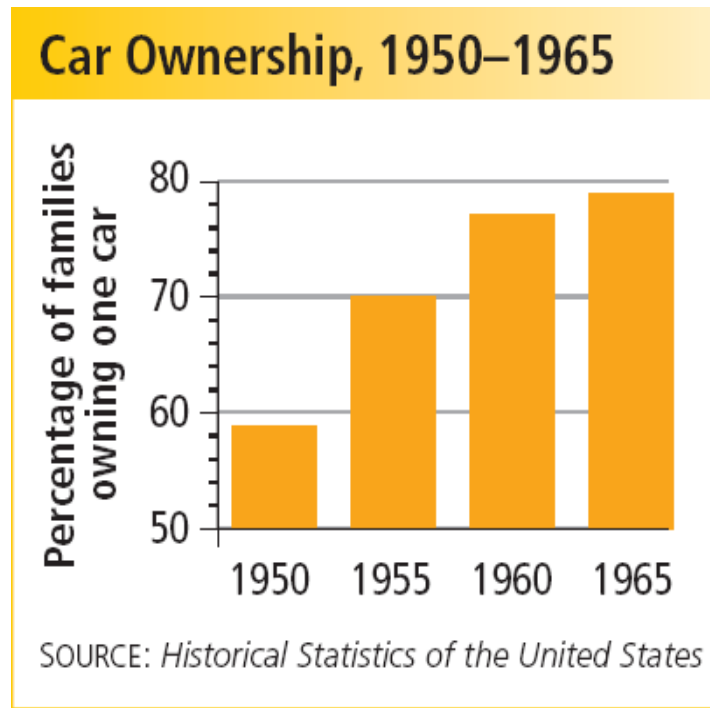
William Levitt built three Levittowns—in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania—which became blueprints for other suburbs soon springing up across the country.

New home buyers received low-interest home loans courtesy of the GI Bill of Rights and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).

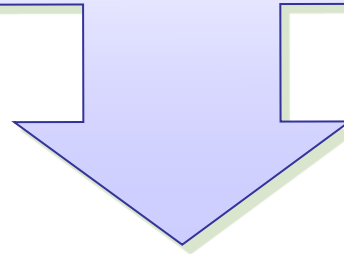
As populations increased, suburbs became self-contained communities with shops, schools, and police departments.

Some suburbanites used public transportation, but many needed cars to commute to work and to shop at suburban shopping malls.

The number of registered automobiles jumped from 26 million in 1945 to 60 million in 1960.

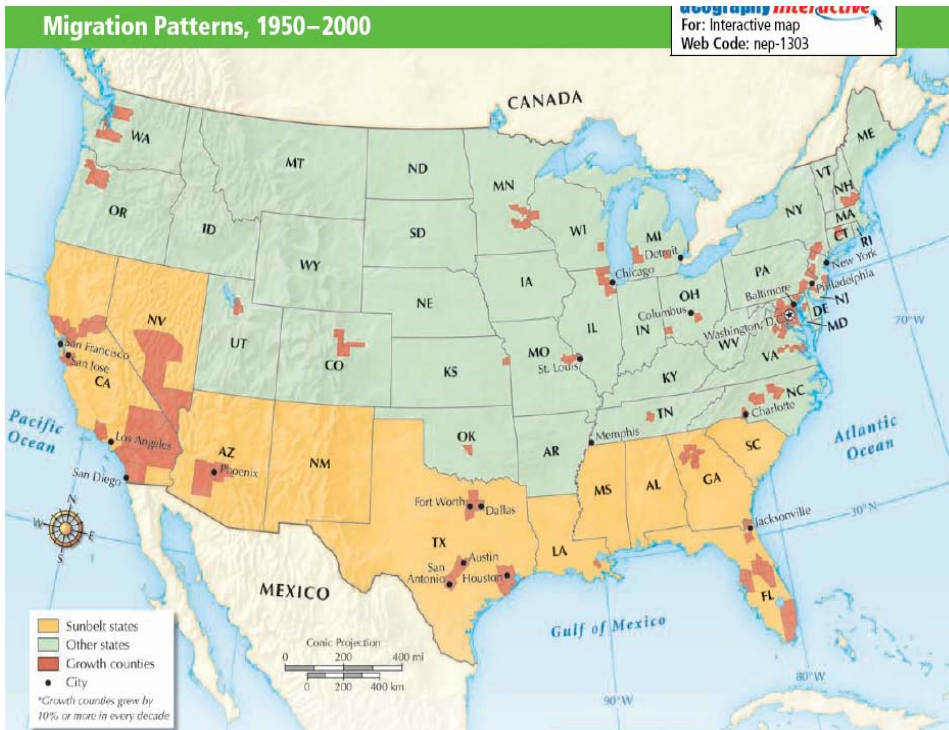


To support the growing “car culture,” in 1953 President Eisenhower authorized funding to build the interstate highway system.



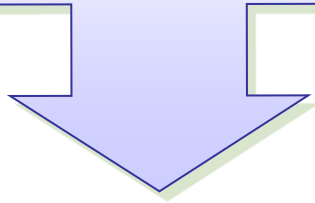
- In 1956, Congress passed the **Interstate Highway Act**, the biggest expenditure on public works in history.
- Fast-food restaurants, drive-in movie theaters, and **the travel and vacation industries** all benefitted from the new roads.

Another crucial trend of the postwar era was the growth of the **Sunbelt**.



Factors that drew people to the Sunbelt included its warm, appealing climate and new jobs in the defense, aerospace, electronics, and petrochemical industries.

As Americans moved to the suburbs and the Sunbelt, these areas:



- **gained political power** with increased congressional representation.
- **faced more environmental concerns** such as air pollution and water shortages.

Population shifts were accompanied by equally ground-breaking structural changes in the American economy.

For the first time in American history, more people found employment in the **service sector** than in the manufacturing sector.



The new **white-collar workforce** included many who worked in **information industries**.



- The information industries often used **computers**.
- By the 1960s, **the government and private industry** had found many uses for the computer.

Other Changes in the Economy

Women in the Workforce

- The number of **women in the workforce doubled** between 1940 and 1960.
- Many worked part-time and were underpaid, but their jobs **boosted their families into the middle class.**

The Decline of Family Farms and the Rise of Technology

- Both the number and percentage of Americans who made a living farming **continued to decline.**
- At the same time, improvements in technology **made farming more productive with fewer workers.**

The postwar period saw changes in types of businesses and in the labor movement.



- **Franchise businesses** were attractive to consumers craving **quality and consistency**.
- **Multinational corporations** expanded.
- Although many new white-collar workers **did not join unions** and labor's image was tarnished by a **corruption scandal**, the **AFL-CIO** still had a great deal of **political clout**.

After the war, more people were able to complete high school and attend college. A more educated workforce boosted productivity.

- **Local and state governments** provided most of the funding for education.
- But after the **Soviets launched *Sputnik 1*** in 1957, Congress approved the \$1 billion National Defense Education Act, **aimed at producing more scientists and science teachers.**

Education is “Democratized”

<p>Accessibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More states built or expanded their college systems. • Many states gave funds to make it easier for ordinary Americans to attend college, using the California Master Plan as a model.
<p>The End of Segregation in Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i> that segregated schools were unconstitutional. • However, it would be years before many schools were integrated.

Objectives

- Explain why consumer spending increased.
- Discuss postwar changes in family life.
- Describe the rise of new forms of mass culture.



Terms and People

- **consumerism** – large-scale buying, much of it on credit
- **median family income** – measure of average family income
- **nuclear family** – ideal or typical household with a father, mother, and children

Terms and People (continued)

- **Benjamin Spock** – influential author of 1946 *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*
- **rock-and-roll** – music originated in the gospel and blues traditions of African Americans
- **Elvis Presley** – iconic American singer whose success sparked the popularity of rock-and-roll music in the 1950s



How did popular culture and family life change during the 1950s?

During the 1950s, the ideal family consisted of a “breadwinning” father and a mother who stayed home to raise children.

The growing influence of television and radio helped shape the social and economic changes of the times.

As the U.S. economy began to boom in the postwar era, Americans were caught up in a wave of **consumerism**.

- During the 1950s, **median family income** rose, so **Americans had more money to spend**.
- Companies introduced **credit cards** and encouraged **buying on credit**.
- **Supermarkets and shopping centers** sprouted, and shopping became a new pastime.



Home appliances topped the list of the goods that Americans bought.



Washing machines, dryers, refrigerators, and stoves transformed housework by lessening its physical demands.

Americans bought televisions in record numbers, and by the end of the 1950s, 90 percent of all U.S. households owned one.

During World War II, many women—including married women with children—had worked in factories.

But when the war ended, most women returned to being homemakers, which is what society expected of them at that time.

Women who wanted a career outside the home faced social pressure to rethink their decision.

Society stressed the importance of the **nuclear family**.

Magazines, TV shows, and movies reinforced the image of the “ideal” American homemaker.



But as the 1950s progressed, more women were willing to challenge the view that women should not have careers outside the home.

By 1960, women held one-third of the nation's jobs, and half of these women workers were married.





More so than in the past, family life revolved around children.

- The best-selling book of the era was Dr. **Benjamin Spock**'s *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, which stressed nurturing.
- Parents spent a great deal of money on clothes, toys, and other items for their children.
- Baby boomer teens had an even greater impact on the economy.

1950s Religious Revival in the United States



Religious Groups and Churches

- Organized religious groups became more powerful, more churches were built, and evangelists attracted large live and TV audiences.
- Regular church attendance rose.

Acts of Congress

- Congress added "In God We Trust" to the dollar bill and "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance to underscore the contrast between America and atheist communist societies.

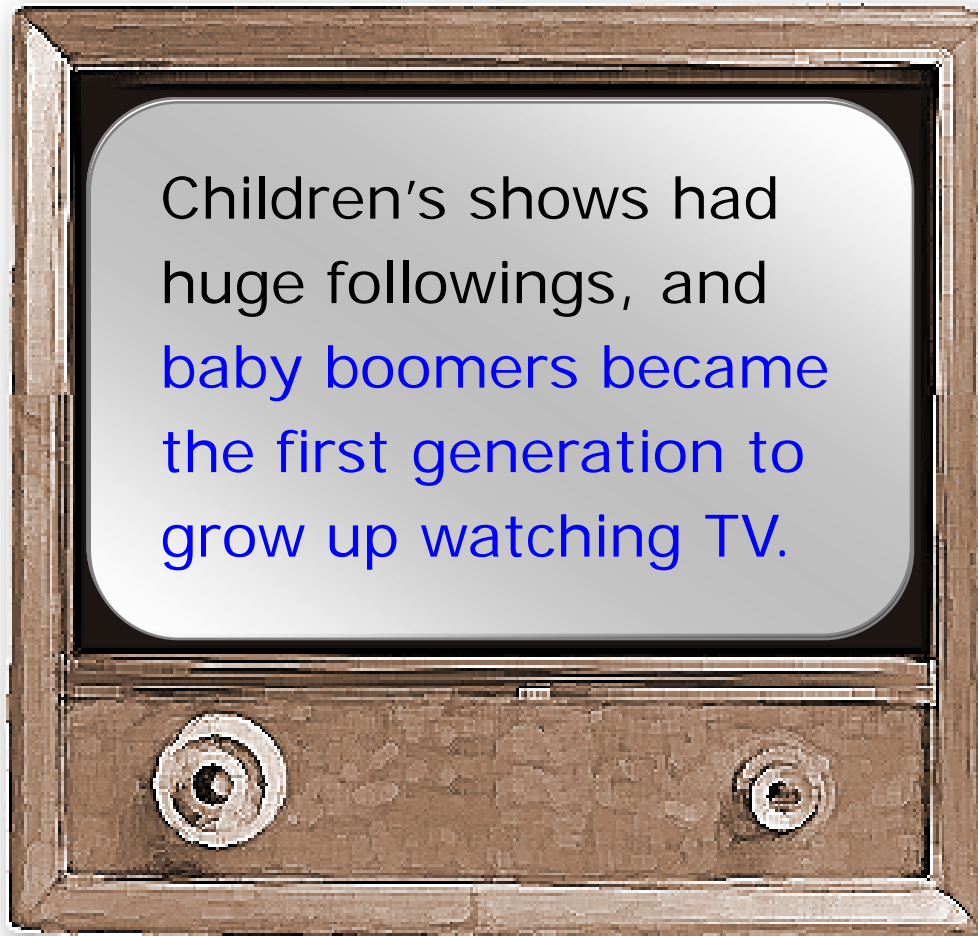


By 1960, the wide-spread distribution of **Dr. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine** had nearly eliminated the disease.

At the same time, **antibiotics came into wide use**, helping to control numerous infectious diseases.

These medical advances, plus a better diet, increased children's life expectancy.

Sales of TVs skyrocketed during the 1950s.




Children's shows had huge followings, and baby boomers became the first generation to grow up watching TV.

Sitcoms, which reflected 1950s ideals, told the stories of happy families with few real-life problems.

Television, along with radio and movies, helped shape a mass national culture.

- Because Americans were exposed to the same shows and advertisements, **the media helped erode distinct regional and ethnic cultures.**
- Starting with the 1952 presidential campaign, **television changed political campaigns** by allowing citizens to see the candidates in action.



In 1951, a white disc jockey named Alan Freed began broadcasting what had been called “race music” to his Midwestern listeners.

Freed renamed the music
rock-and roll.

He planted the seed for a
cultural revolution.



Rock music originated in the rhythm and blues traditions of African Americans.

Whites did not hear many live performances of rhythm and blues because of Jim Crow laws in the South and subtle segregation in the North.

Through the radio, the music attracted a wider audience in the postwar era.

In the early 1950s, Sam Phillips set up a recording studio in Memphis to record African American blues performers.



Phillips signed **Elvis Presley**, who became the first rock-and-roll idol, sold millions of records, and set off the new rock craze.



Although rock-and-roll came to symbolize youth culture, not everyone liked the music.

- Elvis' performance on the Ed Sullivan show **shocked many adults.**
- **Ministers complained** about the passions rock music seemed to unleash among teens.
- **Congress held hearings** on the subversive nature of rock music.

Objectives

- Summarize the arguments made by critics who rejected the culture of the fifties.
- Describe the causes and effects of urban and rural poverty.
- Explain the problems that many minority group members faced in the postwar era.



Terms and People

- **beatniks** – small group of writers and artists, in the 1950s and early 1960s, who were critical of American society
- **inner city** – the older, central part of a city with crowded neighborhoods in which low-income, usually minority, groups live
- **urban renewal** – government programs for redevelopment of urban areas
- **termination policy** – ended all programs monitored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; ended federal responsibility for the health and welfare of Native Americans

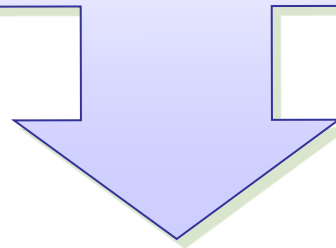


Why were some groups of Americans dissatisfied with conditions in postwar America?

“Hidden” poverty and discrimination plagued some Americans, while others criticized the conformity of middle-class life.

The discontents of the 1950s would manifest the first signs of the dissent that would dominate the 1960s.

Some Americans believed that while material conditions were better in the 1950s, the *quality* of life had not improved.



- Many social critics complained about **the emphasis on conformity** in 1950s America.
- They also criticized **the power of advertising** to mold public tastes.
- The **theme of alienation** dominated a number of popular books of the era.

Important Books of the Postwar Era

Title	Author(s)	Subject
<i>The Lonely Crowd</i>	David Riesman and Nathan Glazer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Americans' sacrifice of individuality
<i>The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit</i>	Sloan Wilson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a World War II veteran who could not find meaning in life
<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>	J.D. Salinger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the phoniness of adult life
<i>The Feminine Mystique</i>	Betty Friedan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the plight of the 1950s suburban housewife

The **beatniks**, or beats, insisted that conformity stifled individualism.

The beats lambasted what they saw as the **crass materialism and conformity** of the American middle class.

Important beat literature included Allen Ginsberg's poem "**Howl**" and Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*.



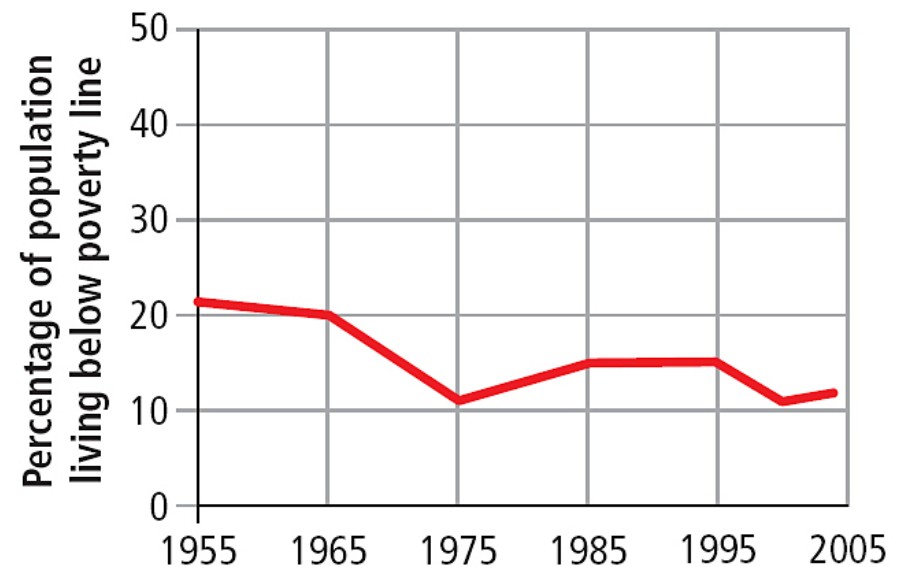
Many Americans were **outraged by their behavior**.

Beyond the suburbs was a very different America.

It was a nation of urban slums, desperate rural poverty, and discrimination.

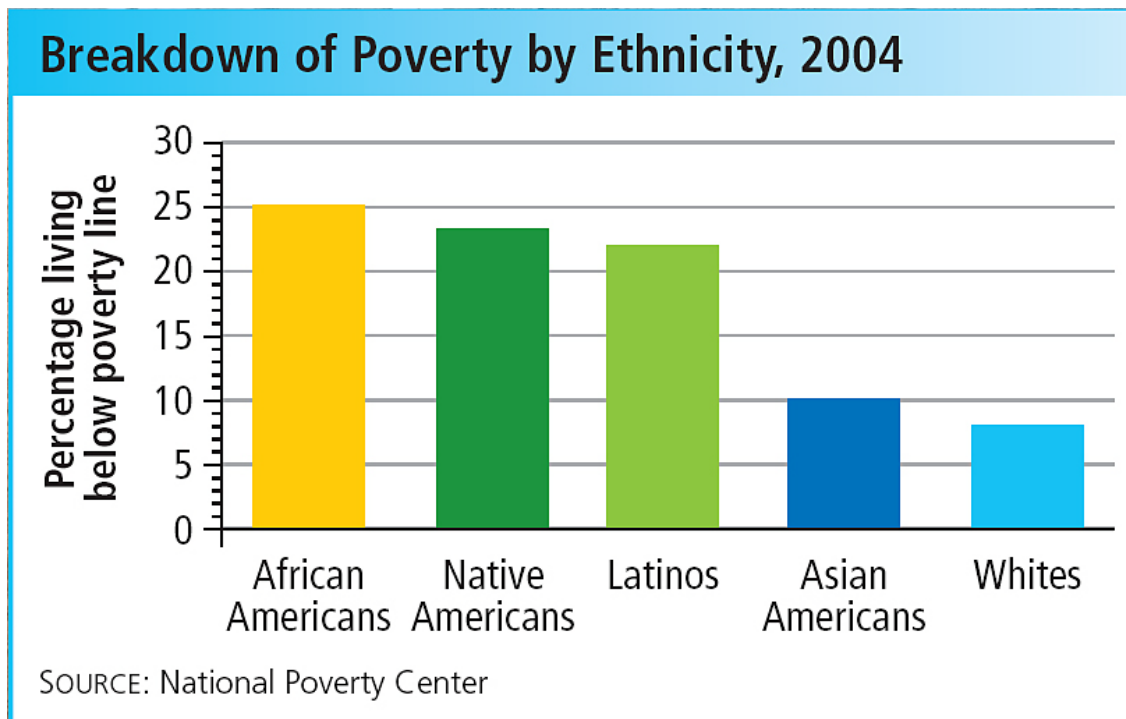
People who were poor and dispossessed were well hidden.

Poverty in the United States, 1955–2005



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

In the influential 1962 book *The Other America*, Michael Harrington shocked many Americans by claiming that 50 million Americans—one-fourth of the nation – lived in poverty.



In the postwar years, many African Americans and other minorities moved to the cities in search of jobs.

At the same time, many middle-class white families left the cities for the thriving suburbs.

Population shifts affected the standard of living in many cities.

The loss of the middle class hurt cities economically and politically.



- The middle class **paid a large share of the taxes**, so without them, **cities were poorer**.
- When much of the middle class moved to the suburbs, they took their **congressional representatives** with them.
- **City services declined** with the loss of economic and political power.

As conditions worsened and crime increased in what was now called the **inner city**, more of the middle class moved to the suburbs.

Government leaders tried to revitalize American cities by developing **urban renewal** projects.

But urban renewal **drove people from their homes** to make room for the new projects and highways.

The federal government tried to ease the housing shortage by building public housing.

At first, public housing residents were happy with their new homes.

But in time, such projects led to **an even greater concentration of poverty**, which led to other problems, **such as crime**.



Many rural people also lived in poverty.



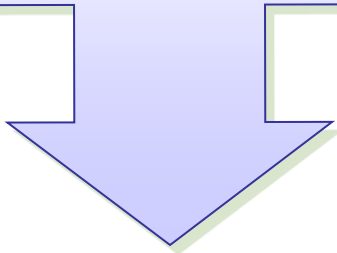
The **economic situation** of Mississippi Delta sharecroppers, Appalachian coal miners, and farmers **got worse as time passed.**

A major transformation in farming was taking place, as corporations and large-farm owners came to dominate farm production.

Small farm-owners found it hard to compete, and they slipped into poverty.

Many farmers left rural areas and moved to the cities, while others stayed behind, hoping for economic improvement.

African Americans and other minorities faced housing and employment discrimination in the urban north and west.



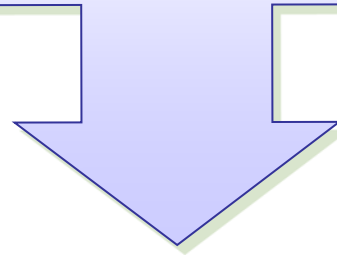
- Puerto Rican migrants to New York City were grouped in inner city neighborhoods where discrimination limited job opportunities.
- Because English was not their native language, they had little political power and received little help from city governments.

By 1964, **3 million Mexicans** had worked in the United States under **the bracero program**, most of them as farm laborers.

Many were exploited and cheated by their employers, but they did not complain because they feared deportation.

One champion of the rights of Mexican migrant workers, **Ernesto Galarza**, joined the effort to **organize unions for Mexican farm laborers.**

In 1953, the federal government enacted the **termination policy**, which sought to end Native American tribal government.



- The policy sought to **relocate Native Americans to cities** and **ended federal responsibility** for them.
- Proponents of the policy argued that it would free Native Americans **to assimilate** into U.S. society, but in reality, **it made conditions worse for them.**