

America in the 1950s



Conformity and hysteria

American Wealth in the 1950s

- Growing private sector
- Massive federal spending
- Technological developments
 - By 1960, 90% of American homes had a television
 - Increased advertising revenue
- Baby Boom
 - One baby born every seven seconds in 1957
 - Return to traditional gender roles

*Eisenhower's
Federal
Highway
Program*

Effects of a growing middle class

- Suburbanization → increased federal home loans, \$ for veterans
- Social Mobility
 - 60% of American categorized as middle class, about double from before WWII
- Expansion of higher education
- Increased migration to the Sun Belt (California, Texas, Arizona)
 - More political and economic power here; shifting away from Northeast

Rise of a mass culture

- Television brings about an increasingly homogeneous culture
 - “Leave it to Beaver”
 - Cold War anxiety
- Challenges to conformity
 - The Beat movement (Jack Keuroac, Allen Ginsburg)
 - Rock and roll, Elvis
 - Conservative backlash

