



CANDACE BARBOT/HERALD STAFF

A FULL NEST: Kelly Penton, 24, press secretary for Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, lives with her parents, Elsa and Sergio, and sister, Janell, in Miami Lakes. Remaining with parents is a tradition among Hispanics.

NO LONGER KIDS, STILL AT HOME

LIVING WITH PARENTS LETS YOUNG ADULTS BUILD CAREERS AND SAVINGS AS THEY DELAY MARRIAGE. BUT WHAT IS IT DOING TO THE BIRTH RATE?

BY DANIEL de VISE
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Beth Cohen, a public-relations account executive in her mid-20s, goes home to the same room she has occupied since birth. She pads around in Cookie Monster slippers. Stuffed bears and images of Justin Timberlake watch over her as she sleeps.

Like many South Floridians her age, Cohen does not plan to leave home until she is a woman of means.

"I want to have the lifestyle that I've been accustomed to," said Cohen, 24, who lives with her mom and dad in Coral Springs. "I want to be able to get out and own my own house and start my own family. But you have to be able to afford those things."

Sociologists talk of a new life stage tucked between adolescence and adulthood: men and women in their 20s lingering in college and postponing marriage as they fortify their

SMART BOX

STAY-AT-HOME GENERATION

Percentages by age of adults who live with their parents.

Age	Miami-Dade	Broward
21-22	44%	48%
23-24	40%	27%
25-29	23%	14%
30-34	12%	6%
Over 35	4%	2%

SOURCES: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series at the University of Minnesota, Census data, Herald research by Tim Henderson

THE HERALD

Life with mom and dad goes on

* YOUNG ADULTS, FROM 1A

résumés and amass savings beneath the roofs of their parents. They are leery of student-loan debt and prohibitive housing costs, drawn to the undeniable allure of free laundry and home cooking.

For some Latin American families, these trends dovetail with tradition: Sons and daughters are invited, even expected, to remain with their parents until marriage.

"I'll still get lectures on why I'm not asking for a raise, why I'm staying out late, why I'm working weekends," said Kelly Penton, 24, press secretary to Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, who lives with her Cuban-American parents in Miami Lakes.

In the mostly post-college 23-to-29 age group, 28 percent of Miami-Dade County residents and 17 percent of Broward County residents still live with their parents, according to the 2000 Census.

The share of young adults nationwide living at home rose steadily from the post-war era until about 1990 and remains high. But the past few

years have brought new recognition that the change in living arrangements is permanent, and new worries about what it could mean for the national birth rate.

FAMILY ISSUE

While the large share of twenty-somethings living with their parents suggests that the American family is alive and well, it also signals that younger Americans are struggling to form new families of their own. Sociologists worry that unless policymakers dramatically lower the costs of education and home ownership, young people will wait ever longer to marry and reproduce. Fewer, older parents inevitably means fewer children.

"This is an investment strategy, in a certain way," said Frank Furstenberg, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania who oversees a network of researchers studying the living patterns of young adults with a MacArthur Foundation grant. "They're accurately seeing that if they ever want to buy a house, if they're ever going to



BOB EIGHNIE/HERALD STAFF

STAYS PUT: Beth Cohen, 24, lives with her parents in Coral Springs. Her bedroom holds some trappings of her childhood.

get married, if they even want a car, they're going to have to save. And, in effect, their families are subsidizing that saving."

SIGNS OF THE PAST

Beth Cohen's dad, Melvyn, owned his own business at 23. Beth, at 24, has a good job, a

boyfriend, a personal trainer, a nice wardrobe and a car.

But the wallpaper in her room hasn't changed since she was 7. Her magazine rack holds old copies of Teen People and YM. Textbooks and yearbooks line the shelves. She still owns a Tickle Me Elmo doll.

"I used to date people who were a little bit older than myself, like 27 or 28, and they were a little uncomfortable with my living at home," said Cohen, two years out of Florida Atlantic University and working at Boardroom Communications in Plantation. "My parents are a little protective."

Beth's older brother, Andrew, died in a solo plane crash eight years ago. When Sharon Cohen pesters her daughter now about driving all the way to the beach at 11 p.m. on a Wednesday, what with all the crazies on the road, it's hard to blame her.

"When I hear her conducting business on the phone, I have to remind myself that she is 24 years old," Sharon Cohen said. "I do have to remind myself of that."

Forty years ago, someone Beth's age would probably be married and living with a spouse. The median age of women at first marriage was 20 in the early 1960s; today, it is 25. In the 1960 Census, just 35 percent of women 18 to 24 years old were living with their parents. Today, the figure is 46 percent.

Today's young adult aspires to be a bit more like Fatima Perez. Born in Cuba, she lived with her parents in Hialeah until she was 28, saved more than \$70,000 and bought a \$200,000 condo in Coral Gables last spring.

Perez, now 29, is not exactly hewing to Cuban tradition, which would have her stay at the family home until marriage. The BellSouth lobbyist is merely engaged.

"You want your own space at some point," said Perez, who is quick to add that she got along well with her parents. "You want to be able to read a book and not hear your dad in the kitchen."

Living patterns have also changed for men, who historically left home and married a bit later than women. The

SMART BOX

CENSUS SNAPSHOTS

Census figures indicate that twenty-somethings who live at home — especially those 24 and younger — are a national phenomenon. Here are national numbers decade by decade.

	Age 18-24		Age 25-34	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
2002	55%	46%	14%	8%
1990	58%	48%	15%	8%
1980	54%	43%	11%	7%
1970	54%	41%	10%	7%
1960	52%	35%	11%	7%

Breaking it down further, here are the most common living arrangements of young people nationwide.

	Age 20-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-34
With parents	41%	15%	8%
With own family	24%	52%	68%
With unrelated roommates	21%	17%	11%
Alone	6%	10%	10%

SOURCE: Bureau of the Census, March 2002

median age of men at first marriage rose from 23 in 1960 to 27 in 2002, according to the census. The share of men in the 25-to-34 bracket still living at home rose from 11 percent to 14 percent in that span.

J.C. Rodriguez, 24, lives with his parents in Weston even though he is engaged and financially secure, working for TransWorld Business Brokers in Fort Lauderdale. "I have a great relationship with my parents," Rodriguez said. "If they had it their way, I'd be living there until I was 30." His only financial obligations are his car, his student loans and his credit cards.

IMAGE AFFECTED

Young men living at home, in particular, face a measure of scorn on the dating market. Within the club scene, a twenty-something who gives an address in Weston or Pinecrest might just as well confess to living with mom.

"They'll usually come right after and say, 'I'm saving up to get an apartment,' or 'I'm saving up to move out,'" said Penton, the mayor's press secretary. "I can't really judge them, because I'm living with my parents, too."

Herald database editor Tim Henderson and staff writer Hector Florin contributed to this report.



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