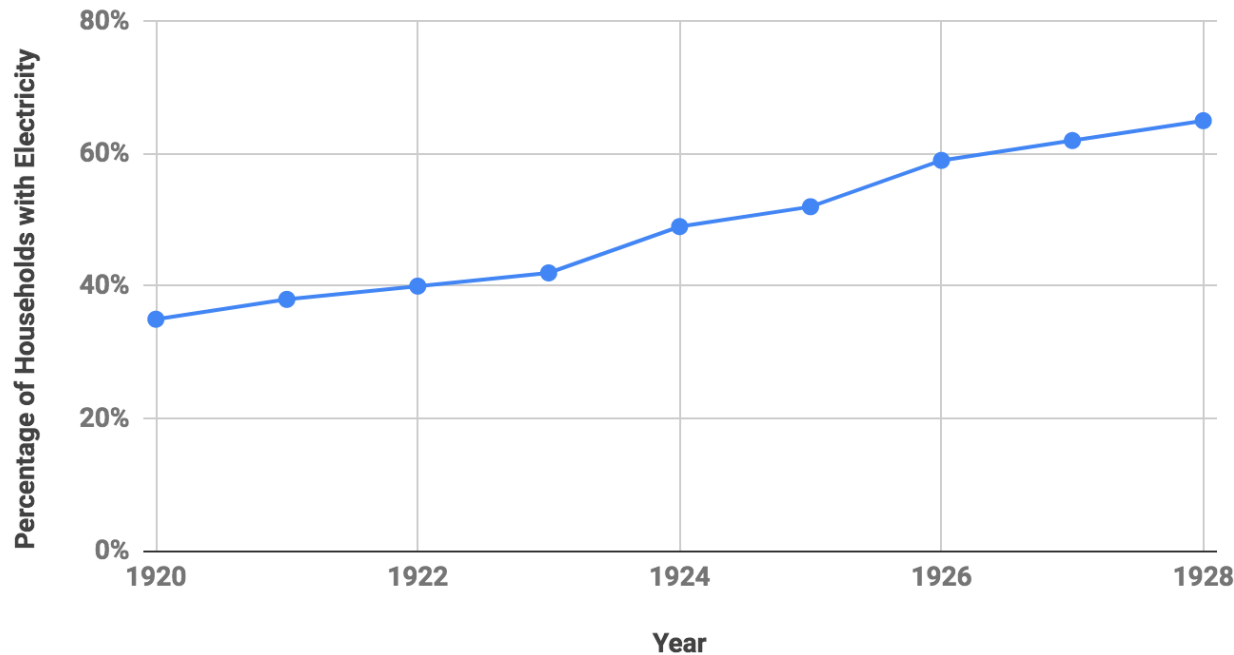


Percentage of Households with Electricity vs. Year



1. Which year was the first year that more than 50% of American households had electricity?

2. How might the widespread availability of electricity have impacted consumerism in the 1920's? [Note: *consumerism is the theory that increasing the consumption or purchase of good is desirable.*]

“This is our proudest boast: ‘The American citizen has more comforts and conveniences than kings had two hundred years ago.’... Consumptionism is the science of compelling men to use more and more things. Consumptionism is bringing it about that the American citizen’s first importance to his country is no longer that of citizen but that of consumer.”

- Samuel Strauss, 1924

3. Samuel Strauss was a journalist and critic of “consumptionism” which he felt had overtaken the country. Why do you think he was against consumptionism?

Stuart Chase *Prosperity: Fact or Myth?* 1929

THE NEW STANDARD OF LIVING: ...It is helpful to list again the specific goods, services and qualities which comprise the new American standard of living.

SHELTER:

- More apartment living
- Electric lights
- Radios
- More attractive villas
- Electric appliances
- Phonographs
- Washing machines
- Telephones
- Furnaces and oil heaters
- Refrigeration
- Five-foot shelves
- Plumbing and bathtubs
- Sleeping porches
- Glittering cocktail services
- Overstuffed furniture

...And less space

CLOTHING:

- More variety
- More accent on underwear
- More fat reducers
- More style
- More commercial laundry
- Permanent waves
- More silk pressing, and cleaning work
- More colorful vestments for men
- Rayon
- More cosmetics

...And poorer quality

FOOD:

- More variety with fewer calories
- More attractive service
- More restaurant eating
- More fresh vegetables
- More milk products
- More tea houses
- More fresh fruit
- More packaged foods
- More drugstore bars
- More tin cans
- More delicatessen shops
- More candy and
- More quick lunches
- More chewing gum

...And less home cooking

SUNDRY [Misc.]:

- Motor cars
- More golf
- Moving and talking pictures
- Clubs, including night clubs
- More traveling
- More new children's toys
- More high school and college education
- More books
- More cigarettes
- More magazines
- More jazz
- More comic strips
- More parks & playgrounds

...And more noise and speed

Mass consumption has also dealt a body blow at the time-honored doctrine of thrift. We are urged on the highest authority to spend rather than to save. Only by spending can we make the wheels of industry turn. We are urged deliberately to waste material. Throw away your razor blades, abandon your motor car, and purchase new...

4. Underline products that are disposable.

5. What is Stuart Chase's view on consumerism?