

Manhattan a sanctuary for singles

Census figures show
it has more living solo
than any other county

By David B. Caruso

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NEW YORK — For all its crowds, Manhattan may also be the country's loneliest metropolis. It has the highest percentage of single-person households of any county in the nation, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

2 Lured by a dizzying social scene and studio apartments, some 354,336 people were living alone in Manhattan at the time of the 2000 Census. Solos accounted for 48 percent of all households on the island, putting it ahead of other singles magnets like Washington, D.C.; St. Louis; Denver; and San Francisco.

Nationally, the number of Americans living alone has exceeded the number of households composed of the classic nuclear family — a married couple and their natural children, according to an analysis of the 2000 Census data published last month.

Thomas F. Coleman, executive director of Un-



Mary Altaffer / AP

James Conavoy inspects a studio apartment he was considering renting to live in by himself in the East Village neighborhood of Manhattan, where 48 percent of households have only one occupant, according to the 2000 Census.

married America, an association that promotes the political interests of single people, credits part of the shift to changing social norms.

People living alone, especially unmarried women, used to be viewed with sadness, he said. That old attitude has fallen away.

"Self-esteem isn't based on having children and being married anymore," Coleman said.

Economics also probably plays a role, said Gordon F. De Jong, a professor of sociology and demography at Pennsylvania State University.

More people are going to college, he said, mean-

ing that they eventually get higher paying jobs that allow them to live by themselves. Older people today have better assets, meaning they can more easily afford to live in their own homes after a spouse dies.

Among the Manhattanites living alone, a slim majority, 56 percent, were women. About 23 percent were people over age 65.

The analysis found that the number of single-person households in the U.S. grew 21 percent in the 1990s, eclipsing the growth rates for all other types of living arrangement.