

# Who is middle class?

A Palo Alto Weekly survey, conducted in December and early January, drew more than 250 responses. Among the questions: "How do you define your social class?" Here is a summary of the answers.

## Upper middle class

Seventy-five identified themselves as "upper middle class." Their self-reported incomes ranged from \$50,000 to \$400,000 or more (with one retiree reporting \$35,000-\$49,999). Survey comments included:

- We do not have to worry about staying afloat financially, so we can put our money toward health, education, and comfort.
- Upper middle class. Former professor, advanced degrees.
- The income is actually pretty high, but it is a single income with two kids. A huge bulk of it is spent on things like college or the mortgage, so there's less disposable income for luxuries and buying bougie food and buying clothes. My peers do that a lot more, and even some with lower incomes.
- Upper middle class by Palo Alto standards, wealthy as compared to the rest of the world. We are fortunate to be able to live in Palo Alto but cannot dream of buying property here.
- Upper middle class - we are probably "rich" by some people's definition but definitely don't have a fancy lifestyle (one house, basic cars, no fancy vacations or extravagant purchases).
- Technically, by income level, we're upper class. But that sounds snotty to say in the U.S.
- Upper middle income, wealthy in assets (I do startups, so my salary is kept low, but I've sold two of them, so most of my wealth is from stock).

## Middle class

Eighty-one people considered themselves "middle class." Their self-reported incomes ranged from \$10,000 to \$399,999. Survey comments included:

- We're comfortable and never want for healthy food or clean clothing. It can be difficult to afford necessities like child care.
- Probably middle class, but not anywhere close to being able to afford a house.
- In this area, it feels like middle-of-the-road middle class, but where I'm from, I'd own a house and be in the upper middle class.
- Here in Palo Alto, I feel a bit below the norm, but still middle class. I have two degrees from Stanford, but neighbors on either side of me have PhDs. Hence the slight feeling of inferiority.
- Middle class only because we're surrounded by hundreds of millionaires in Palo Alto.
- We consider ourselves the typical middle class with two kids and two working parents. Our income seems high but comparing to the cost of living here in Palo Alto, we truly believe we are an average family.
- I think of myself as middle class, but in this environment I don't feel nearly as financially secure as I expected to be at my age (73).
- In almost any other part of the country we would be wealthy. Here, we are living month to month.

## Lower middle class

Seventeen considered themselves "lower middle class" or "working class." Their self-reported income ranged from \$35,000 to \$349,999. Comments:

- I've lived in Palo Alto my whole life. Only get to stay here because the house is paid off.
- We are not homeless or go hungry at night, but we sometimes do live paycheck to paycheck and have to budget if we make unexpected purchases.
- If asked I would probably say I'm poor. I can't afford the things that others around me take for granted. I have to be very careful with my money.

## Other

Upper class: Four reported being in the "upper class," three of whom reported earning \$400,000 a year or more (the fourth is retired).

No answer: Eighty-nine people declined to answer the question or wrote their own answers, including that they were "disenfranchised," "former middle class" and "survivors in an unjust capitalist society."