

PewResearchCenter

 **Pew Research Center for the People & the Press**

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No Consensus About Whether Nation Is Divided Into 'Haves' and 'Have-Nots'

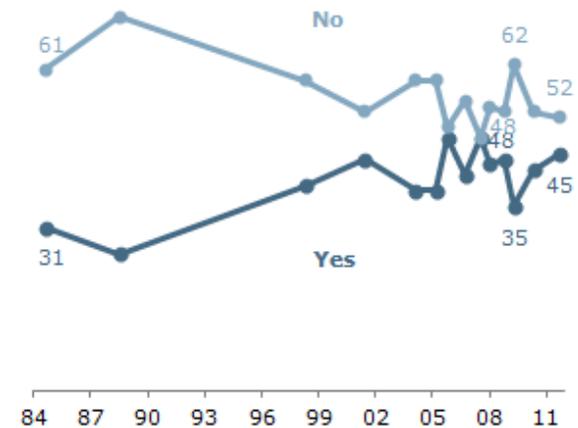
Despite an extended economic downturn, the public's impression of whether the nation is economically divided remains relatively stable. While 45% say American society is divided between "haves" and "have-nots," 52% say it is incorrect to think of the country this way. This is comparable to the balance of opinion a year ago.

The percentage of Americans who see society as divided between haves and have-nots declined shortly after Barack Obama took office, but has rebounded since. In April 2009, just 35% said the nation was divided economically, down from 44% in October 2008. The number saying the nation is economically divided increased to 42% a year later and has changed little since then (45% currently).

Since 2009, the percentage of independents saying the country is divided between haves and have-nots has risen 15 points, from 32% to 47%. There has been a comparable increase in the proportion of Democrats expressing this view (from

Public Divided in Perceptions of Economic Divisions

Is American society divided into two groups, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'?



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47% to 59%). Just 27% of Republicans see the nation as economically divided, which is largely unchanged from two years ago (24%).

While consistent with views over much of the past decade, the balance of opinion about economic division in the country stands in contrast to where it was a quarter century ago. In Gallup polls in the mid-1980s, far wider majorities rejected the idea that the country was divided into haves and have-nots.

The latest survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and The Washington Post, conducted Sept. 22-25 among 1,000 adults, finds that 48% say that, if forced to choose, they are among the haves, while 34% say they are among the have-nots. This balance of opinion has changed little over the past six years. Over the longer term, however, the number seeing themselves in the have-nots has risen substantially. In 1988, half as many described themselves this way (17%) as is the case today (34%).

By two-to-one (29% vs. 15%), more Americans think the Obama administration does more to help the have-nots than to help the haves, with a plurality (45%) saying it treats both groups about equally.

Public impressions of congressional Republicans are quite different: 47% say they are mostly helping the haves, while just 7% say they are mostly helping the have-

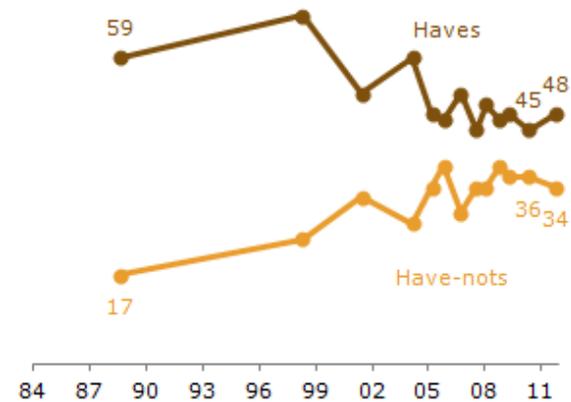
Most Democrats Now See a Nation Divided

America is divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots'	Oct 2008 %	Apr 2009 %	Apr 2010 %	Sept 2011 %	09-11 Change
Total	44	35	42	45	+10
Republican	27	24	32	27	+3
Democrat	58	47	51	59	+12
Independent	43	32	43	47	+15

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More See Themselves as 'Haves' than as 'Have-Nots'

If you had to choose, which of these groups are you in?



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nots; 32% say Republicans are treating both groups the same. Current assessments of the Republicans in Congress are similar to 2004 opinions of which group George W. Bush's administration was doing more to help (47% the haves, 4% the have-nots, 42% both

Nearly Half Say Republicans Do More to Help the 'Haves'

	Obama admin.	Reps in Congress
<i>Is doing more to help the ...</i>	%	%
'Haves'	15	47
'Have-nots'	29	7
Treating both the same	45	32
Neither/DK	<u>11</u>	<u>13</u>
	100	100

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Partisan Views of Who Does More for the 'Haves' or 'Have-Nots'

Obama administration <i>is doing more to help the...</i>	Total			
	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%
'Haves'	15	16	10	15
'Have-nots'	29	39	31	26
Treating both the same	45	31	55	46
Neither/DK	<u>11</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>12</u>
	100	100	100	100

Republicans in Congress <i>are doing more to help the...</i>				
	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%
'Haves'	47	20	72	46
'Have-nots'	7	8	9	6
Treating both the same	32	60	10	34
Neither/DK	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>14</u>
	100	100	100	100
N	1000	244	302	377

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about the same).

Interestingly, partisan differences are relatively modest in views of which groups the Obama administration is doing more to help. More Republicans, Democrats and independents say the administration is doing more to help the have-nots than the haves. By contrast, 72% of Democrats say the GOP mostly helps the haves, compared with 46% of independents and just 20% of Republicans.

Haves and Have-Nots: Long-Term Views

There long have been wide racial differences in views of whether the nation is economically divided. In the current survey, 73% of African Americans say the nation is divided between haves and have-nots, compared with 40% of whites.

When Gallup first asked this question in 1988, blacks were almost twice as likely as whites to express this view (49% vs. 24%). There also have been persistent partisan and income differences in these opinions.

In 1988, far more Americans saw themselves as haves than have-nots (59% vs. 17%), but the balance of opinion has narrowed. In recent years, nearly half have placed themselves in the haves while slightly more than a third see themselves as have-nots.

While partisan differences in these self-assessments have fluctuated, income differences have been fairly consistent over time. In the current survey, 75% of those with family incomes of \$75,000 or more say they are haves, compared with 46% of those with incomes of \$30,000 to \$75,000 and 36% of those with incomes of less than \$30,000.

Blacks More Likely to Say Nation Is Divided between 'Haves' and 'Have-Nots'

Percent saying nation is divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots'

	1988	2001	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	26	44	48	44	35	42	45
Republican	19	34	33	27	24	32	27
Democrat	32	52	63	58	47	51	59
Independent	26	44	46	43	32	43	47
Dem-Rep gap	+13	+18	+30	+31	+23	+19	+32
\$75,000+*	18	40	43	31	27	35	36
\$30-\$74,999	28	44	53	44	34	40	47
<\$30,000	30	53	52	56	48	52	53
Low-High gap	+12	+13	+9	+25	+21	+17	+17
White**	24	41	44	39	29	37	40
Black**	49	66	65	75	60	66	73
Blk-Wht gap	+25	+25	+21	+36	+31	+29	+33
Men	23	44	46	41	33	42	45
Women	28	44	51	46	36	43	45
Gender gap	+5	0	+5	+5	+3	+1	0

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/WASHINGTON POST Sept 22-25, 2011. 1988 data from Gallup. *Household income categories in 1988 and 2001 are adjusted for inflation to roughly reflect current dollar values. ** Hispanic figures not shown either because too few interviews were available or because some surveys did not include Spanish language interviewing.

Where People See Themselves

	1988	2001	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
'Haves'	59	52	45	47	48	45	48
'Have-nots'	17	32	34	38	36	36	34
Republicans							
'Haves'	63	63	50	59	55	52	66
'Have-nots'	15	22	27	26	28	28	23
Democrats							
'Haves'	56	51	44	43	47	46	41
Have-nots	21	36	39	47	42	39	42
Independents							
'Haves'	60	48	45	44	47	41	47
'Have-nots'	15	35	32	38	36	41	32
R-D Gap	+7	+12	+6	+16	+8	+6	+25
\$75,000+*							
'Haves'	82	82	66	72	72	63	75
'Have-nots'	7	6	19	16	17	19	12
\$30-\$74,999							
'Haves'	61	57	40	46	51	45	46
'Have-nots'	16	27	36	37	32	37	36
< \$30,000							
'Haves'	46	31	33	26	30	31	36
'Have-nots'	28	56	47	64	58	52	51
Hi-Lo Gap	+36	+51	+33	+46	+42	+32	+39

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