



## Middle Class America: Working Hard But Getting Nowhere

Leigh Egan

March 18, 2015

Middle class isn't quite what it used to be. While in previous generations, securing a long-term career with benefits generally equaled financial stability, a new report by *NBC* suggests that middle class Americans are working harder but struggling more than ever before.

Graduating from college doesn't always guarantee a successful career, but people who spend numerous years studying for a degree usually think that they will at least have a job that doesn't require flipping burgers or clearing tables.

Yet, *NBC* reports that adults ranging in age from 18 to 34 are not only earning less these days when compared to the average earnings of their age group 15 years ago, but are taking jobs that they would have imagined only working as a teenager or struggling college student.

*NBC* worked with Vanderbilt University political scientist Josh Clinton in determining the type of jobs and earnings of middle class adults. Vanderbilt notes that many well-educated adults are making substantially less than they should.

“We see Ph.D.s from Harvard teaching as adjuncts, factory workers making minimum wage when they might have made middle-class wages before.”

*The New York Times* reports that middle class Americans, described as households making anywhere from \$35,000 to \$100,000 per year, are a dwindling group.

As the search for stable, well-paying employment gets more difficult, people are maxing out credits cards and taking out loans they cannot pay just to keep a roof over their heads. Some are not that lucky. Millions of foreclosures and short sales have occurred in the past eight years alone.

So, what can be done to help the struggling middle class? Some experts believe that banks should work with, not against people who need them, and make ethical business practices. Mark Calabria, director of the Cato Institute, says that banks should stop giving out loans that are impossible to pay, something that is still going on today.

“As the housing bubble/bust and resulting foreclosures demonstrated, we don’t do families a favor getting them into a home they can’t sustain. Nor do we do a favor to small businesses giving them loans they can’t repay. So government policy should refrain from pushing banks to make loans based on political need rather than sound business practices.”

Fortunately, there may be hope for the middle class. According to the *New York Times*, the economy may be slowly improving as more jobs are being generated, specifically in areas such as healthcare and other professional fields.

Meanwhile, President Obama is slated to make a speech in Cleveland, Ohio, regarding the shrinking middle class and what should be done to help as we move forward. The speech is scheduled to take place on Wednesday at downtown Cleveland’s City Club.