



# NATIONAL REVIEW

## **Americans Have More to Be Thankful for than You'd Think**

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Every time you turn on the television these days, there seems to be more bad news. No matter your political or ideological leanings, it is hard to deny that 2017 has been a trying year. We've seen neo-Nazis on the march, an alleged child molester on the verge of being elected to the U.S. Senate, political deadlock, terrorism at home and abroad, the specter of nuclear war, fires, and floods.

Yet, as we approach this period of Thanksgiving, it is worth remembering that, beyond the headlines, things are actually pretty darn good. There is more than enough to be thankful for. Start with a subject critical to all of us: the economy. Unemployment recently hit its lowest level since 2007, before the Great Recession. And the job growth is not simply the result of low-paying "McJobs," either: Wages are up 2 percent compared to a year ago.

The rising tide is helping to raise all boats. Yes, the stock market is at record levels, which is great news for everyone with a 401(k) or a pension plan. But the equally great news is that poverty is down. In fact, by the most accurate measures, American child poverty is now at an all-time low. Overall, poverty is at its lowest level since 2007. Report: US border agent may have been beaten to death 00:15 00:42 Powered by Most of this progress has come because of America's vibrant, entrepreneurial free-market system, rather than government policy. The U.S. economy still produces wonders that improve our lives on a daily basis. Just pull out your smartphone and marvel at technology that didn't exist a decade ago.

Not only are we doing well ourselves, but we continue to share our bounty. According to the most recent report from Giving USA, Americans contribute nearly \$400 billion annually to charity. And this doesn't include the millions of hours we spend volunteering to help others. America remains one of the most generous societies in history.

What's more, while mass-shootings may leave us fearful, the reality is that this country is still a remarkably safe place to live. President Trump's claims to the contrary notwithstanding, crime rates have actually declined this year. In fact, nationally, we are on track for the second lowest level of crime since 1990. The same applies to terrorism. Even after recent attacks, your chances

of dying in an attack by foreign terrorists on U.S. soil are still just 1 in 3,808,094 annually. Every death is a tragedy, but we should hardly feel terrorized.

Disadvantaged groups in our society are also doing especially well. For example, while it is important that we pay attention to the issues of sexual harassment and assault that have begun coming to light in recent weeks, it is equally important that women's wages are now rising faster than men's at every level of education. Women who graduate college have done exceptionally well. Since 1979, women with a college education have seen their real wages rise by 35 percent, while similarly educated men have seen just a 20 percent increase. That is particularly good news, since women are now more likely to go to college than are men.

There is similarly good news for African Americans. The rise of white nationalism is frightening. But, even so, we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the inflation-adjusted per capita income of America's black population has risen roughly 15 percent in the past 15 years, and 10 percent since the end of the Great Recession.

America remains imperfect when it comes to the treatment of women and minorities, but we should never forget just how far we have come, nor the fact that we are still trying to go farther. For all the turmoil of the last year, diversity remains a strength of this country, and the numbers bear that out: 14 percent of U.S. infants are now multiracial or multiethnic, up from 5 percent in 1980. Most important of all, this time of year reminds us that we still have the friends, families, and loved ones that make our lives complete. Yes, there is plenty of reason to be anxious about the future. But, there is even more reason to be thankful for the present. Happy Thanksgiving.

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