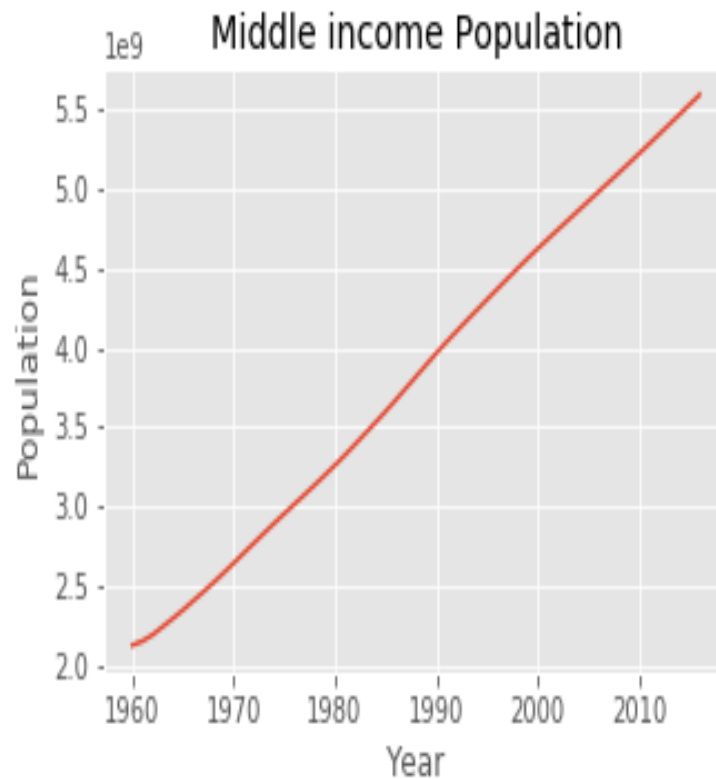


Middle income



The middle class is a class of people in the middle of a social hierarchy. In Weberian socio-economic terms, the middle class is the broad group of people in contemporary society who fall socio-economically between the working class and upper class. The common measures of what constitutes middle class vary significantly among cultures. A sizable and healthy middle-class can be viewed as a characteristic of a healthy society. The term "middle class" is first attested in James Bradshaw's 1745 pamphlet *Scheme to prevent running Irish Wools to France*. Another phrase used in Early modern Europe was "the middling sort". The term "middle class" has had several, sometimes contradictory, meanings. It was once defined by exception as an intermediate social class between the nobility and the peasantry of Europe.[by whom?] While the nobility owned the countryside, and the peasantry worked the countryside, a new bourgeoisie (literally "town-dwellers") arose around mercantile functions in the city. In France, the middle classes helped drive the French Revolution. Another definition equated the middle class to the original meaning of capitalist: someone with so much capital that they could rival nobles. In fact, to be a capital-owning millionaire was the essential criterion of the middle class in the industrial revolution.