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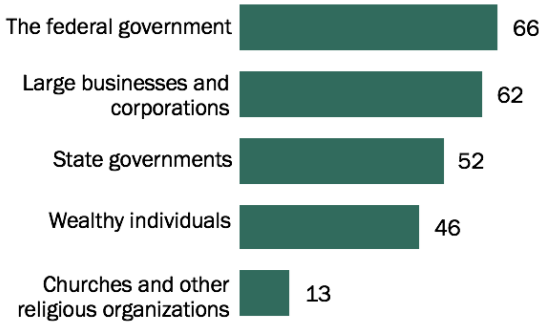
MOST AMERICANS SAY THERE IS TOO MUCH ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN THE U.S., BUT FEWER THAN HALF CALL IT A TOP PRIORITY

## 4. Views on reducing economic inequality

BY [JULIANA MENASCE HOROWITZ](#), [RUTH IGIELNIK](#) AND [RAKESH KOCHHAR](#)

### Most say federal government and large corporations should have a lot of responsibility in reducing inequality

*Among those who say there is too much economic inequality, % saying each of the following should have a lot of responsibility in reducing inequality in the country*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 16-29, 2019.  
“Most Americans Say There Is Too Much Economic Inequality in the U.S., but Fewer Than Half Call It a Top Priority”

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Most Americans who say there's too much economic inequality in the country think the federal government and big business should play a role in reducing inequality. Smaller but sizable shares say state governments and wealthy individuals should have a lot of responsibility in this regard.

Asked how much, if at all, a series of measures would do to reduce economic inequality, those who say there's too much inequality see merit in a variety of approaches. But one stands out in particular: About nine-in-ten say ensuring workers have the skills they need for today's jobs would do at least a fair amount to reduce inequality, with more than half of Democrats and Democratic leaners (65%) and Republicans and Republican leaners (56%) saying this would do *a great deal* to reduce it. Most adults who say there's too much economic inequality (60%) also say increasing taxes on the wealthiest Americans would do a great deal to reduce inequality, but there's less consensus among Democrats and Republicans on this and the other measures asked about in the survey.

About eight-in-ten adults who say there's too much economic inequality say that, in order to reduce inequality, it would be better for the government to invest in education and job training programs for people who are poor. Just 15% say it would be better to give direct assistance to people who are poor in the form of cash payments or tax credits. And while 84% of those who say there's too much economic inequality think the government should raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans in order to reduce inequality, only about one-in-ten – and about a third of those in the top 7% of the sample's adjusted income distribution – say the government should raise taxes on people like them.

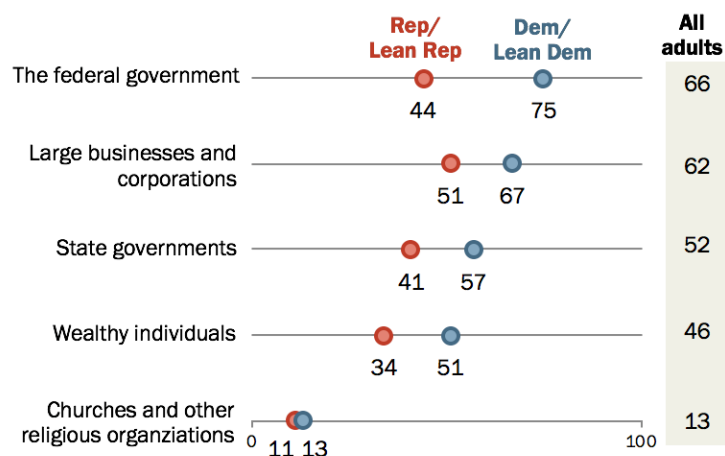
The survey also finds that more than half of all U.S. adults think the federal government has a responsibility to provide all Americans with high-quality K-12 education, adequate medical care, health insurance, adequate income in retirement and an adequate standard of living.

Across nearly all questions about reducing economic inequality, the views of Democrats and those who lean Democratic differ widely from those of Republicans and Republican leaners.

**About two-thirds who say there's too much economic inequality say the federal government should have a lot of responsibility in reducing it**

## Democrats more likely than Republicans to say government, corporations, wealthy individuals should have a lot of responsibility in reducing inequality

Among those who say there is too much economic inequality, % of **Republicans** and **Democrats** saying each of the following should have a lot of responsibility in reducing inequality in the country



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 16-29, 2019.

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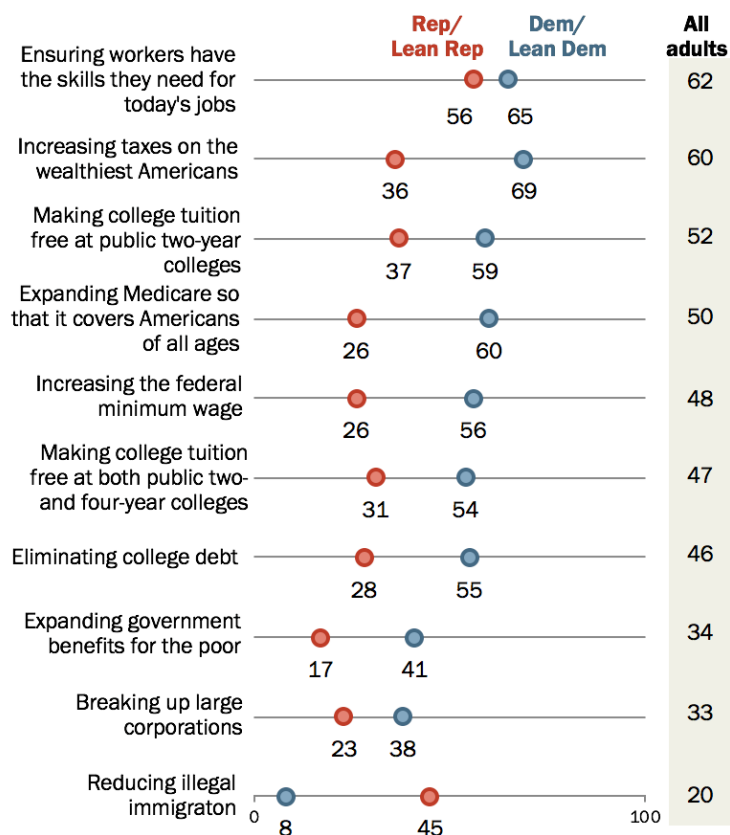
Among U.S. adults who think there's too much economic inequality in the country these days, most say the federal government (66%) and large businesses and corporations (62%) should have a lot of responsibility in reducing economic inequality. About half (52%) say state governments should have a lot of responsibility in this area, and 46% say the same about wealthy individuals. Just 13% say churches and other religious organizations should have a lot of responsibility in reducing economic inequality.

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say the federal government, state governments, large businesses and corporations, and wealthy individuals should have a lot of responsibility in reducing economic inequality. For example, among those who say there is too much inequality, majorities of Democrats say the federal (75%) and state (57%) governments should have a lot of responsibility in this area. Fewer than half of Republicans who see too much inequality say these groups should have a lot of responsibility for reducing it (44% say the federal government and 41% say state governments should have a lot of responsibility).

## Republicans and Democrats largely disagree on how effective different measures would be at reducing economic inequality

## Republicans are less convinced than Democrats that several measures would reduce economic inequality

Among those who say there is too much economic inequality, % of **Republicans** and **Democrats** saying each of the following would do a great deal to reduce economic inequality in the U.S.



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 16-29, 2019.

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The survey asked U.S. adults how much, if at all, several measures would do to reduce economic inequality in the U.S., regardless of whether they support them. Among those who say there's currently too much economic inequality, 93% say ensuring workers have the skills they need for today's jobs would do at least a fair amount to reduce it, with 62% saying this would do a *great deal*. In fact, this is the only measure that majorities of Democrats (65%) and Republicans (56%) who think there's too much economic inequality say would do a great deal to reduce it.

Most adults who say there's too much economic inequality in the country these days (60%) also say increasing taxes on the wealthiest Americans would do a great deal to reduce economic inequality. About half say the same about making college tuition free at public two-year colleges (52%), expanding Medicare so it covers Americans of all ages (50%), and increasing the federal minimum wage (48%).

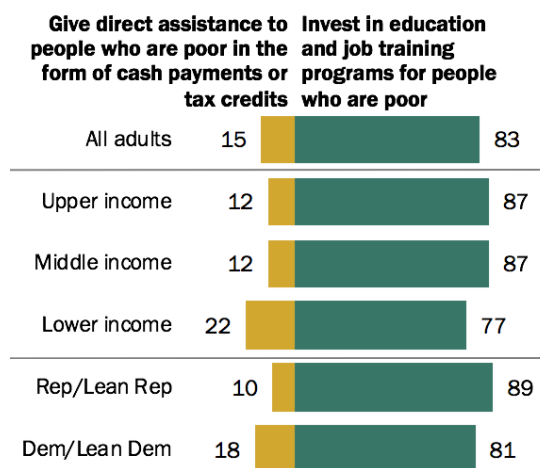
With the exception of ensuring workers have the skills they need for today's jobs, there is a double-digit gap in the shares of Democrats and Republicans who say each of the measures included in the survey would do a great deal to reduce economic inequality. For example, about seven-in-ten Democrats who say there's too much economic inequality in the U.S. (69%) say increasing taxes on the wealthiest Americans would do a great deal to reduce inequality; 36% of their Republican counterparts say the same. Reducing illegal immigration is the only measure that a larger share of Republicans (45%) than Democrats (8%) see as potentially reducing economic inequality a great deal, among those who say there's too much economic inequality in the country today.

For the most part, lower-income adults who say there's too much economic inequality are more likely than those with middle and upper incomes to say the measures asked about in the survey would do a great deal to reduce economic inequality. There are a few exceptions. When it comes to breaking up large corporations and reducing illegal immigration, lower- and middle-income adults have similar views and are more likely than those with upper incomes to say each would do a great deal to reduce inequality. And on ensuring workers have the skills they need for today's jobs, similar shares across income groups say this would do a great deal to reduce inequality.

**About eight-in-ten U.S. adults who say there's too much inequality see investment in education and job training for the poor as a better way to address it**

## Education and job training, rather than direct assistance to poor people, seen as better way to address inequality

*Among those who say there is too much economic inequality, % saying that, in order to address economic inequality in this country, it would be better for the government to ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Family incomes are adjusted for differences in purchasing power by geographic region and for household size. Middle income is defined as two-thirds to double the median annual income for the survey sample. Lower income falls below that range, upper income falls above it.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 16-29, 2019.

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When those who say there's too much economic inequality in the U.S. are asked about the best approach for addressing it, most (83%) say it would be better for the government to invest in education and job training programs for people who are poor. Only 15% say a better way to address economic inequality would be for the government to give direct assistance to people who are poor in the form of cash payments or tax credits.

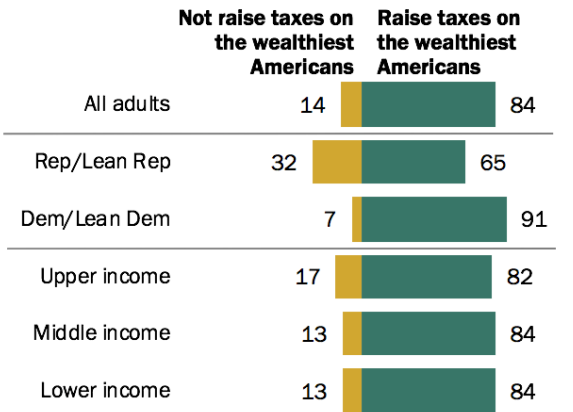
Democrats who say there's too much economic inequality are more likely than their Republican counterparts to say it would be better for the government to give direct assistance to people who are poor, but relatively small shares of both groups say this (18% of Democrats vs. 10% of Republicans). Fully 89% of Republicans and 81% of Democrats who say there's currently too much economic inequality in the country see investments in education and job training programs for people who are poor as a better way to address it.

Among lower-income adults who say there's too much economic inequality, about one-in-five (22%) say giving direct assistance to the poor would be the better way for government to address economic inequality, compared with about one-in-ten of those with middle or upper incomes (12% each).

Most Democrats and Republicans who say there’s too much economic inequality say the government should raise taxes on the wealthy to address it

Most who say there’s too much inequality say the government should raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans

Among those who say there is too much economic inequality, % saying that, in order to address economic inequality in this country, the government should ...



Note: Share of respondents who didn’t offer an answer not shown. Family incomes are adjusted for differences in purchasing power by geographic region and for household size. Middle income is defined as two-thirds to double the median annual income for the survey sample. Lower income falls below that range, upper income falls above it.  
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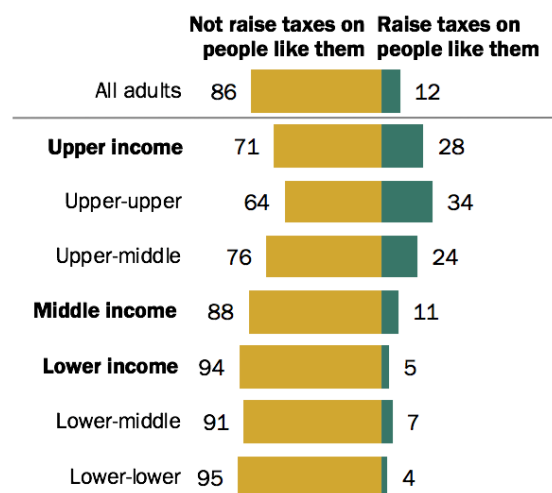
More than eight-in-ten U.S. adults who say there’s too much economic inequality in the country these days (84%) say the government should raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans in order to address economic inequality. This view is far more widespread among Democrats (91%) than among Republicans (65%), but majorities of both groups share this opinion.

Across income groups, large majorities of those who say there’s too much economic inequality in the U.S. these days say that, in order to address the issue, the government should raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans. At least eight-in-ten of those with upper (82%), middle (84%) and lower (84%) incomes say this.

Most across income levels say the government should not raise taxes on people like them in order to address economic inequality

## Across income groups, large shares say the government shouldn't raise taxes on people like them to deal with inequality

*Among those who say there is too much economic inequality, % saying that, in order to address economic inequality in this country, the government should ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Family incomes are adjusted for differences in purchasing power by geographic region and for household size. Middle income is defined as two-thirds to double the median annual income for the survey sample. Lower income falls below that range, upper income falls above it. Lower-lower is less than half, lower-middle is half to two-thirds, upper-middle is two to three, and upper-upper is more than three times the median annual income for the survey sample. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 16-29, 2019. "Most Americans Say There Is Too Much Economic Inequality in the U.S., but Fewer Than Half Call It a Top Priority"

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The vast majority of Americans who say there's too much economic inequality in the country these days (86%) say the government should *not* raise taxes on people like them in order to address economic inequality; 12% say the government should raise their taxes in order to deal with inequality.

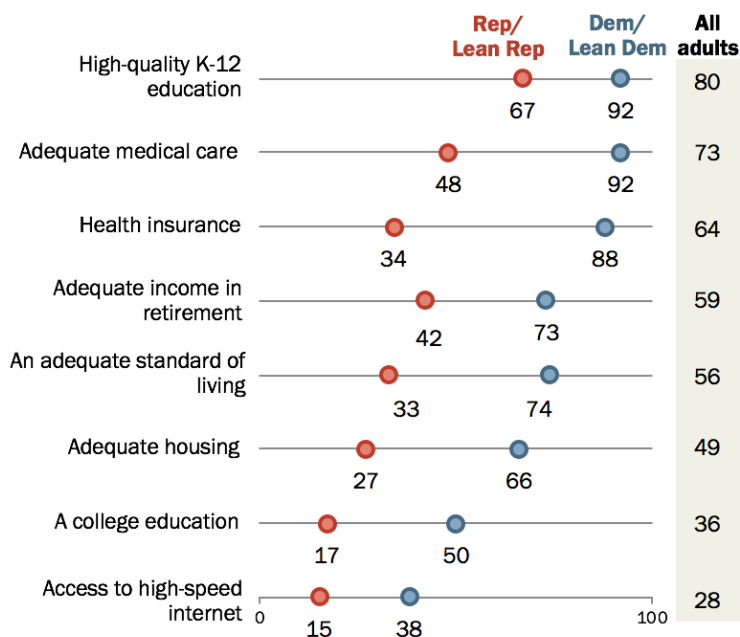
While upper-income adults who say there's too much economic inequality (28%) are more likely than those with middle (11%) and lower (5%) incomes to say the government should raise taxes on people like them in order to address economic inequality, large shares across income groups say the government should not raise their taxes. In fact, among those with the highest incomes – a subset of upper-income adults who are in the top 7% of the sample's adjusted income distribution – about two-thirds (64%) say the government should not raise taxes on people like them, while 34% say the government should do this to deal with economic inequality.

## Most U.S. adults say the federal government has a responsibility to provide health insurance and adequate medical care for all Americans



## Nearly all Democrats, but only about half of Republicans, say the government has a responsibility to provide adequate medical care for all Americans

% of **Republicans** and **Democrats** saying the federal government has a responsibility to provide each of the following for all Americans



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 16-29, 2019.

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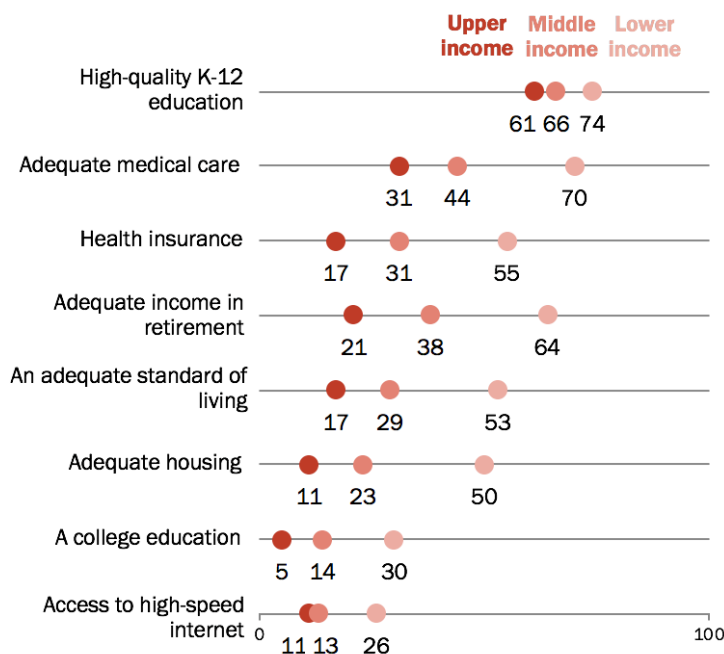
Asked more generally about the federal government's role in providing support and services, eight-in-ten U.S. adults say the federal government has a responsibility to provide high-quality K-12 education for all Americans. Majorities also say the federal government has a responsibility to provide adequate medical care (73%), health insurance (64%), adequate income in retirement (59%) and an adequate standard of living (56%). About half or fewer say the federal government has a responsibility to provide adequate housing (49%), a college education (36%) and access to high-speed internet (28%) for all Americans.

Large shares of Democrats see the federal government having a responsibility to provide most of these to all Americans. About two-thirds of Democrats or more say the federal government should provide high-quality K-12 education (92%), adequate medical care (92%), health insurance (88%), adequate retirement income (73%), an adequate standard of living (74%) and adequate housing (66%) for all Americans. In contrast, with the exception of high-quality K-12 education, about half or fewer of Republicans say the federal government has a responsibility to provide each of these to all Americans.

Half of Democrats – vs. just 17% of Republicans – think the federal government has a responsibility to provide a college education to all Americans. And while the share of Democrats (38%) who say the federal government should provide access to high-speed internet is lower than it is for any other of the eight items in the survey, the share of Republicans who hold this view is far lower, at 15%.

### Lower-income Republicans are more likely than those with higher incomes to say the federal government has a responsibility to provide certain things

Among **Republicans and Republican leaners** across income tiers, % saying the federal government has a responsibility to provide each of the following for all Americans



Note: Figures include those who identify with or lean to the Republican Party. Family incomes are adjusted for differences in purchasing power by geographic region and for household size. Middle income is defined as two-thirds to double the median annual income for the survey sample. Lower income falls below that range, upper income falls above it.

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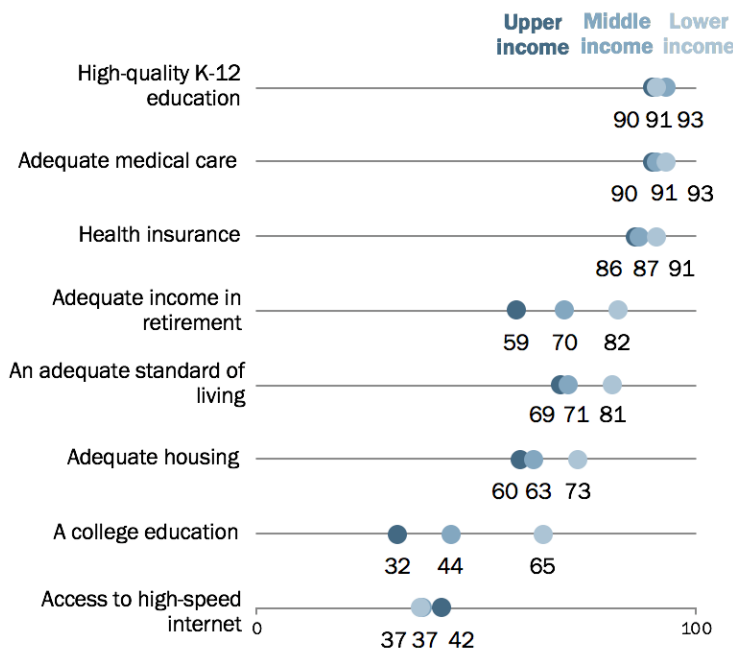
Overall, lower-income adults are more likely than those with middle or upper incomes to say the government has a responsibility to provide each of the eight items tested in the survey. There are wide income differences among Republicans on all items. Income differences are also present, although less consistent, among Democrats.

By double-digits, larger shares of lower- than middle- or upper-income Republicans say the federal government has a responsibility to provide adequate medical care, health insurance, adequate income in retirement, an adequate standard of living, adequate housing, a college education and access to high-speed internet to all Americans. On each of these items except for access to high-speed internet, middle-income Republicans are more

likely than those with upper incomes to see a responsibility for the federal government in providing for all Americans.

### Most lower-income Democrats, but fewer than half with middle or upper incomes, say the government has a responsibility to provide a college education to all

Among **Democrats and Democratic leaners** across income tiers, % saying the federal government has a responsibility to provide each of the following for all Americans



Note: Figures include those who identify with or lean to the Democratic Party. Family incomes are adjusted for differences in purchasing power by geographic region and for household size. Middle income is defined as two-thirds to double the median annual income for the survey sample. Lower income falls below that range, upper income falls above it. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 16-29, 2019.

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Among Democrats, about two-thirds of those with lower incomes (65%) say the federal government has a responsibility to provide a college education to all Americans, compared with 44% of middle-income and 32% of upper-income Democrats. Lower-income Democrats are more likely than those with middle and upper incomes to say the federal government has a responsibility to provide adequate income in retirement, an adequate standard of living and adequate housing. Across income levels, majorities of Democrats (about six-in-ten or more) say the federal government has a responsibility to provide each of these.

Similarly large shares of Democrats across income levels (roughly nine-in-ten) say the federal government has a responsibility to provide high-quality K-12 education, adequate medical care and health insurance. About four-in-ten Democrats with lower, middle and

upper incomes say the federal government has a responsibility to provide access to high-speed internet.

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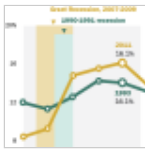
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