

= Average Joe =

The terms average Joe , ordinary Joe , Joe Sixpack , Joe Lunchbucket (for males) and ordinary , average , or plain Jane (for females) , are used primarily in North America to refer to a completely average person , typically an average American . It can be used both to give the image of a hypothetical " completely average person " or to describe an existing person . Parallel terms in other languages for local equivalents exist worldwide .

Today , statistics by the United States Department of Commerce provide information regarding the societal attributes of those who may be referred to as being " average " . While some individual attributes are easily identified as being average , such as the median income , other characteristics , such as family arrangements may not be identified as being average .

In 2001 , for example no single household arrangement constituted more than 30 % of total households . Married couples with no children were the most common constituting 28 @. @ 7 % of households . It would nonetheless be inaccurate to state that the average American lives in a childless couple arrangement as 71 @. @ 3 % do not . Other " average " characteristics are easier to identify .

In terms of social class , the average American may be described as either being middle or working class . As social classes lack distinct boundaries the average American may have a status in the area where the lower middle and upper working class overlap . Overall the average American , age 25 or older , made roughly \$ 32 @, @ 000 per year , does not have a college degree , has been , is , or will be married as well as divorced at least once during his or her lifetime , lives in his or her own home in a suburban setting , and holds a white @- @ collar office job .

" Average Joes " are common fodder for characters in television or movies , comics , novels or radio dramas . On television , examples of " average Joes " include Doug Heffernan (King of Queens) , Alan Harper (Two and a Half Men) and Homer Simpson (The Simpsons) . In the film Dodgeball : A True Underdog Story , the protagonist , Peter , owns a gym for those who don 't want an intensive workout , and the patrons of the gym are all somewhat overweight . The gym is named Average Joe 's Gymnasium .

In real life , as chronicled in his bestseller The Average American : The Extraordinary Search for the Nation 's Most Ordinary Citizen , Kevin O 'Keefe successfully completed a nationwide search for the person who was the most statistically average in the United States during a multi @- @ year span starting in 2000 . Newsweek proclaimed of the book , " The journey toward run @- @ of @- @ the @- @ mill has never been so remarkable . "

= = Families = =

As the United States is a highly diverse nation , it should not be surprising that there is no single prevalent household arrangement . While the " nuclear family " consisting of a married couple with their own children is often seen as the average American family , such households constitute less than a quarter of all households . Married couples without children are currently the plurality constituting 28 @. @ 7 % of households , compared to 24 @. @ 1 % for nuclear families .

Another 25 @. @ 5 % of households consisted of single persons residing alone . Recent trends have shown the numbers of nuclear families as well as childless married couples decrease . In 1970 , 40 @. @ 3 % of US households consisted of nuclear families with childless couples making up 30 @. @ 3 % of households and 10 @. @ 6 % of households being arranged in " Other family types . "

By 2000 the percentage of nuclear families had decreased by 40 % , while the number of other family types had increased by 51 % . The percentage of single households has also steadily increased . In 1970 , only 17 % of households consisted of singles . In 2000 that figure had increased by 50 % with singles constituting 25 @. @ 5 % of households . The most drastic increase was among the percentage of households made up of single males , which nearly doubled from 5 @. @ 6 % in 1970 to 10 @. @ 7 % in 2000 .

Today , one can no longer refer to the nuclear family as the average American household , neither can one identify the current plurality of married couples without children as " the average . " Recent

statistics indeed indicate that there is no average American family arrangement , but that American society is home to a wide and diverse variety of family arrangements . The one thing the data does indicate is that the average Joe most likely does not reside in a nuclear 4 @-@ person family .

" The nuclear family ... is the idealized version of what most people think of when they think of " family ... " The old definition of what a family is ... the nuclear family- no longer seems adequate to cover the wide diversity of household arrangements we see today , according to many social scientists (Edwards 1991 ; Stacey 1996) . Thus has arisen the term postmodern family , which is meant to describe the great variability in family forms , including single @-@ parent families and child @-@ free couples . " - Brian K. Williams , Stacey C. Sawyer , Carl M. Wahlstrom , Marriages , Families & Intimate Relationships , 2005 .

A statement that can be made , however , is that most Americans will marry at least once in their lifetime with the first marriage most commonly ending in divorce . Today a little over half (52 @. @ 3 %) of US household include a married couple , showing a significant decrease since 1970 when 70 @. @ 6 % of households included a married couple . Current trends indicate that people in the US are marrying later and less often with higher divorce rates .

Despite the declining prevalence of marriage , more than three @-@ quarters of Americans will marry at least once in their lifetime . The average age for marriage for a male was 26 @. @ 8 and 25 @. @ 1 for a female . Americans are also likely to remarry after their first divorce . In 1990 , 40 % of all marriages were remarriages . All together one can conclude that while there is no prevalent average household arrangement , most Americans (the average Joe) will get married and divorced once with a considerable number of Americans remarrying at least once .

= = Income = =

Income in the United States is most commonly measured either by individual or household . In 2005 the median personal income , the amount earned by the average Joe or average Jane , is largely determined by who is or who is not included in the statistics . Personal income statistics are given in accordance to a variety of demographic characteristics . The median income for all 233 million persons over the age of 15 was \$ 28 @, @ 567 .

By only including those above age 25 , the vast majority of students and all working adolescents are excluded . The median income for the people above the age 25 was \$ 32 @, @ 140 in 2005 . Of those with incomes , over the age of 25 , almost three quarters , 73 @. @ 31 % , the median income was clocked at \$ 39 @, @ 336 in 2005 . This figure excludes those employed part @-@ time , students , working teenagers , retirees and the unemployed . Depending on whether or not those working part @-@ time are included , the average American makes between \$ 32 @, @ 000 and \$ 39 @, @ 000 .

In 2005 , 42 % of all households and 76 % of households in the top quintile had two or more income earners . As a result , there was a considerable discrepancy between household and personal income . Recent studies , such as the one conducted by Harvard professor Elizabeth Warren , have shown that the average American household needs two incomes in order to live what is commonly perceived as a middle @-@ class lifestyle .

The median income per household member was clocked at \$ 24 @, @ 672 in 2005 . This means that the average Joe earns roughly \$ 32 @, @ 000 a year , lives in a household with an income of \$ 46 @, @ 000 with \$ 24 @, @ 000 of gross annual income per member . Personal income changes considerably over the life @-@ time of the average American , from \$ 28 @, @ 000 at age 25 to about \$ 42 @, @ 000 at the age of 65 . Yet , very young and old persons would commonly not be considered to be average Americans .

SOURCE : US Census Bureau , 2006

= = = Income at a glance = = =

= = Education = =

The US population seems almost equally divided between those who have and those who have not attended college . While only a minority of Americans , 27 % , have graduated from college with a Bachelor 's degree or more , a slight majority , 53 % , of Americans had " some college " education . As only 36 % had an Associates degree or more , with only roughly 9 % having a graduate degree . On the other end of the strata , 14 % of persons did not graduate from high school .

It is fair to assume that the average Joe / Jane is neither a college graduate nor a high school drop out . It is , however , difficult to determine whether or not the average American has some college education as the population is split between those who did and did not attend college . Over the past half century the educational attainment of the US population has significantly increased .

The income of an individual with some college education was also similar to the overall mean personal income . The mean personal income for someone with some college education was \$ 31,054 , compared to \$ 32,140 for the overall population , age 25 or older with earnings . The mean income for a high school graduate , on the other hand , was considerably below the national mean personal income estimated at \$ 26,505 .

Overall , despite a slight decrease in the percentage of high school graduates and significantly slower growth of college graduate , the average American is more educated today than ever before , having graduated from high school and likely , though not necessarily , attended college .

SOURCE : US Census Bureau , 2005

= = Social class = =

In terms of social class the average American may be referred to as being either a member of the middle or working class . The discrepancy is largely the result of differing class models and definitions of what constitutes a member of the middle class . Currently the vast majority of Americans self identify themselves as middle class , yet some experts in the field such Michael Zweig of Stony Brook University or Dennis Gilbert of Cornell University have brought forth different theories . As most Americans are neither professionals nor managers and lack college degrees the average American may be described as being either or both , lower middle and working class .

" Everyone wants to believe they are middle class . For people on the bottom and the top of the wage scale the phrase connotes a certain Regular Joe cachet . But this eagerness to be part of the group has led the definition to be stretched like a bungee cord " - Dante Chinni , the Christian Science Monitor

Occupational autonomy is a key factor in regards to class positions . Professionals and managers who are exclusively labeled as middle class and often as upper middle class , conceptualize , create and consult in their jobs . Due to their great expertise they enjoy a high degree of autonomy in the work place .

The American economy , however , does not require a labor force consisting solely of professionals . Instead it requires a greatly diverse and specialized labor force . Thus the majority of Americans complete assigned tasks with considerably less autonomy and creative freedom than professionals , leading to theory that they may better be described as being members of the working class .

= = Occupation = =

Most Americans today are white collar salaried employees who work in varied environments , including offices , retail outlets , and hospitals . Roughly one quarter (23 %) of Americans were employed in the traditional blue collar fields that require hard physical labor with another 14 % employed in the service industry . Office administrators or more colloquial , secretaries , were the largest single occupation in the United States . In 2004 there were 4.1 million secretaries with a median income of \$ 34,970 , near the national median of \$ 32,000 .

Overall those employed in office administrative and support , service and sales occupations

constituted 38 % of the labor force . Those employed in business and professional as well as professional support occupations (e.g. nurses) made up 38 % of the labor force . Combined white collar employees including service workers such as restaurant servers and hotel maids constituted 76 % of the labor force . If service workers are excluded 62 % were employed in white collar occupations .

Educational attainment varied greatly depending on occupational field with 68 % of those in the professional and professional support fields having a bachelor 's degree or higher , compared to only 31 % of those employed in sales and 11 % of those in the service sector . Considering the fact that the average American does not have a bachelor 's degree , he or she is most likely employed in the service , sales , and office support fields with many working in the professional support and business fields as well . All together the American economy and labor force have changed greatly since the middle of the 20th. century with most workers today being employed in office and service occupations .

= = Homeownership = =

According to US Department of Commerce data the vast majority , 67 % of housing units in the United States were owner occupied , had three or fewer bedrooms with one or less occupant per room (including kitchen , dining room , living room , etc ...) and were mortgaged . The overwhelming majority , 85 % , of all housing units had three or fewer bedrooms while 15 % of all housing had 4 or more bedrooms . The plurality of housing units , 40 % , had three bedrooms . The vast majority , 67 % , of housing units were mortgaged with 52 % households spending 25 % or less of their annual income on mortgage payments .

The median value of a housing unit in the US was \$ 167 ,000 in 2005 with the median mortgage payment being clocked at \$ 1 ,295 . The average size of a household was 2.5 persons with almost all housing units , 97 % , having 1 or fewer occupants per room . However , the term " room " does not exclusively refer to bedrooms , but includes the kitchen , dining room , family room , bath rooms and any other rooms a house might have . While 85 % of American homes had 3 or fewer bedrooms the median number of total rooms per housing units was 5.3 in 2005 . Considering these statistics one can conclude that the average American resides in his or her own home , pays roughly \$ 1 ,000 per month in mortgage payments for a three or less bedroom house with no more than one occupant per room .

US Census Bureau data from 2002 identified a series of housing characteristics for units owner occupied units inhabited by households with average incomes , ranging from \$ 40 ,000 to \$ 60 ,000 . The median square footage for homes occupied by middle income households was 1 ,700 with 52 % of such homes having two or more bathrooms . The median value of these homes was \$ 112 ,000 with the median year of construction being 1970 . Middle income households tended to spend roughly 18 % of their monthly income on housing . Considering these statistics it is likely that many average Americans reside in 1 ,700 square foot (160 m2) homes , priced slightly above \$ 100 ,000 with two or more bathrooms that were built in the late 1960s and early 1970s . However , the taken income is slightly above average .