

6 Signs That You've Made It to the Middle Class

Do you consider yourself middle class?

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Not so long ago, most people viewed the hallmarks of success as something along the lines of a house, a white picket fence, two weeks vacation, two children, and the ability to send those kids to college.

Today, the middle class is a vanishing breed, according to nearly every survey and statistic on the topic. Despite all of the attention to the subject, defining "middle class" remains a challenge, as everyone wants to be in the middle regardless of their income. Instead of focusing on the dollars, let's take a look at the six lifestyle benchmarks that define middle-class status.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There is no official financial standard that defines the middle class, but there are certain benchmarks that seem to attest to that classification.
- Owning a home and car, as well as being able to pay for your children to go to college are among the milestones.
- Being able to tuck away enough money for your retirement is significant, as is the ability to obtain healthcare for yourself and your family.
- Having enough disposable income to take your family on vacation is another benchmark.

6 Signs You Are Middle Class

While there is no official financial standard, the middle class as defined by the the Middle Class Task Force formed under the Obama Administration characterized this segment of the U.S. population in terms of six financial aspirations that still hold true. We can view them as benchmarks. If you can check off each of these six points, you are likely at least a member of the middle class:

1. Home Ownership

Owning a home remains the American dream. The step up from renting to owning signifies prosperity and achievement. With median home price ranges differing by so much in different cities across the United States, the ability to achieve this goal varies significantly by geographical location.

2. Owning a Car

Owning a car provides freedom of movement and the luxury of avoiding the limited schedules and cramped quarters offered by mass transportation options, such as buses and subways. Here again, the cost of cars varies widely, as does the kind of automobile required. For one driver, a used Hyundai will do the trick. For another, a new BMW signifies the achievement of this goal.

3. A College Education for the Kids

Helping children get ahead in life is a primary goal for middle-class families. Paying for a college education for children can cost anywhere from the low tens of thousands of dollars to hundreds of thousands. The university or college those children attend has a significant impact on the price tag.

4. Retirement Security

Retirement is a goal nearly everyone wants to achieve. It demonstrates success and provides a reward for decades of hard work. Once again, definitions make a difference. The amount of savings required to support your later years will vary significantly depending on whether you contemplate a staff of 10 at your villa in the South of France or a townhouse in Peoria, Ill.

5. Healthcare Coverage

The ability to obtain healthcare is an important goal for middle-class wage earners and their families. The high and rising cost of medical care and prescription drugs make healthcare coverage an ever-increasing need; going without it can have serious negative financial implications in the event of a severe illness or injury.

6. Family Vacation

The family vacation is a middle-class staple. Vacations demonstrate that a family has disposable income and has been successful enough to take time away from work to focus on leisure.