

# The Social Crisis in America: Pick Your Poison

By [Joel S. Hirschhorn](#)

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*One of the hardest truths to accept is that for most sources of pain hitting humans there seems to be nothing effective for government to do. Nowadays, those of us who do not gobble various distractions but work to stay connected to reality see two dreadful conditions. People are dying or suffering from earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes, extreme heat, huge snow storms and more.*

*While you may be fighting your paranoia about being victimized by foul weather the other ugly reality already devastating the lives of so many people is a dismal set of economic conditions. Contrary to all the usual lies by politicians about the economic recovery, a mountain of data shows non-delusional people that only the wealthy have escaped economic pain.*

According to a recent [Pew Charitable Trusts](#) poll, 55 percent of Americans still rate the national economy as poor, and just 47 percent believe their kids will have a higher standard of living than they enjoy. If more people paid closer attention to the facts, those percentages should be more like 80 or 90 percent.

The US has recovered just 1.8 million of the nearly 9 million jobs lost in the downturn versus an average 5.3 million job gains in the same period of the 1970s and 1980s recoveries. The number of people with jobs has barely changed since June 2009 — up just 0.4 percent. Many economists say the turnaround shows no signs of generating the 300,000 to 400,000 monthly payroll additions needed to rapidly lower the unemployment rate. There are probably about 50 million Americans who are unemployed, underemployed or no longer trying to get decent jobs, or who are close relatives of them. The rise of the official unemployment rate in May, 2011 (the real level is twice as high) and a paltry new number of jobs just rubbed salt in the wound. There simply is no basis for believing that many millions of new, good jobs will be created for many years.

Add the latest news that the housing market has turned even worse again, leading to the distressful conclusion that a double-dip recession has hit housing, which portends even wider economic pain. Single family home prices dropped in March, 2011 to their lowest level since April 2009. Millions of home foreclosures will be followed by even more. Of all homes with mortgages 23 percent are worth less than what is owed.

And don't forget that there are enormous numbers of Americans fighting hunger even though 68 percent of Americans are obese or overweight. Forty four million Americans are getting food stamps.

Meanwhile higher prices for key necessities show that inflation is eating away at quality of

life and living standards. Gas prices climbed 52 percent over the past two years, according to the Department of Energy, and are only now decreasing a little as many Americans have cut back on their driving. Food costs are also rising just like health care.

Nothing the government has done worked for ordinary Americans. Many billions of dollars spent on reviving the economy have mainly helped the business sector and the rich. Congress and President Obama have shown themselves to be utterly useless. They mostly serve corporate interests.

Both the economic and climate futures look bleak, because they are bleak.

Pick your poison. We are living in a time when natural and economic conditions are out of control and frightening. But wait, there is some good news!

According to a new report by [Boston Consulting Group](#), the number of millionaire households in the world grew by 12.2 percent in 2010, to 12.5 million. Here is how millionaires are defined: Those with \$1 million or more in investible assets, excluding homes, luxury goods and ownership in one's own company. Can you relate? Even better news: The US still leads the world in millionaires, with 5.2 million millionaire households.

An even bigger truth is this: The world's millionaires represent just 0.9 percent of the global population but control 39 percent of the world's wealth, up from 37 percent in 2009. Even more truth about economic inequality: Those with \$5 million or more, who represent only 0.1 percent of the population, control 22 percent of the world's wealth, up from 20 percent in 2009. The rich are really getting richer.

If you face reality, remember that Obama promised back in February 2009 that his \$830 billion stimulus plan would unleash "a new wave of innovation, activity and construction" and "ignite spending by businesses and consumers." Did not happen.

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And in June 2010, Obama announced that the recovery was "well under way" and that it "is getting stronger by the day." More poisonous propaganda.

A couple months later, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner wrote a New York Times op-ed headlined "Welcome to the Recovery." More self-serving garbage.

In reality, two years after the recession officially ended there are few places beyond the stock market and corporate profits that have shown improvement, but even now the stock market is hurting. The rich and powerful have not suffered. But over the past decade, real private-sector wage growth has been a terrible 4 percent, just below the 5 percent increase

from 1929 to 1939 during the Great Depression.

The Republicans who grabbed so much power in the last midterm elections show no capacity whatsoever to fix anything. That Sarah Palin just as Donald Trump can grab so much media attention demonstrates how decrepit our nation is.

What is to be learned? No member of Congress or the President deserves to be reelected. Neither does any other Republican or Democrat. Like extreme weather calamities, economic evils will continue to poison our lives. Those who deny climate change and economic injustice are either stupid or delusional. Waiting for divine intervention makes as much sense as anything, except that all the awful stuff happening, if God's will, suggests such hope is folly. Pass the poison. Or wait for a tornado, home loss, or financial ruin to hit. More bad news is coming. But have you ever seen pictures of tornadoes destroying McMansions?

Contact Joel S. Hirschhorn through [www.delusionaldemocracy.com](http://www.delusionaldemocracy.com).

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Articles by: [Joel S. Hirschhorn](#)

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