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# Majorities Say Government Does Too Little for Older People, the Poor and the Middle Class

*Partisan, age gaps in views of government help for younger people*

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*Partisan, age gaps in views of government help for younger people*

Majorities of Americans say the federal government does not provide enough help for older people (65%), poor people (62%) and the middle class (61%). By contrast, nearly two-thirds (64%) say the government provides too much help for wealthy people.

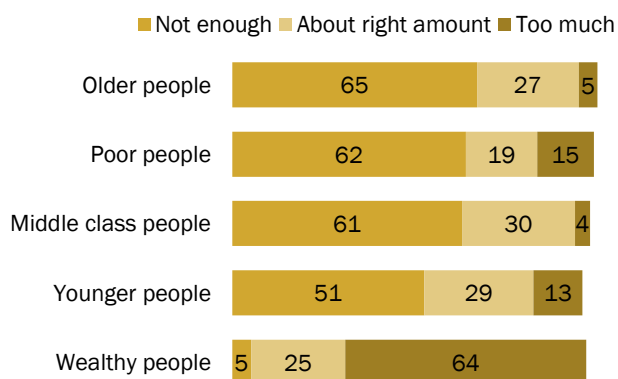
Opinions are more divided about the amount of help the government provides for younger people: About half (51%) say the government does not do enough for younger people, 29% say the government provides about the right amount of help, while 13% say it provides too much.

The national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted Jan. 10-15 among 1,503 adults, finds that views on government help for the poor, the middle class and the wealthy – as well as for older people – have changed little in recent years. This is the first time this series has included a question about younger people.

There are partisan differences in views of government support for all groups included in the survey. However, the gap is somewhat narrower in views of government help for older people than for other groups. While 73% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents say the federal government does not do enough for older people, a smaller majority of Republicans (58%) say the same.

## Government viewed as doing too little for older people, poor, middle class

*How much help does the federal government provide to each group? (%)*



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018

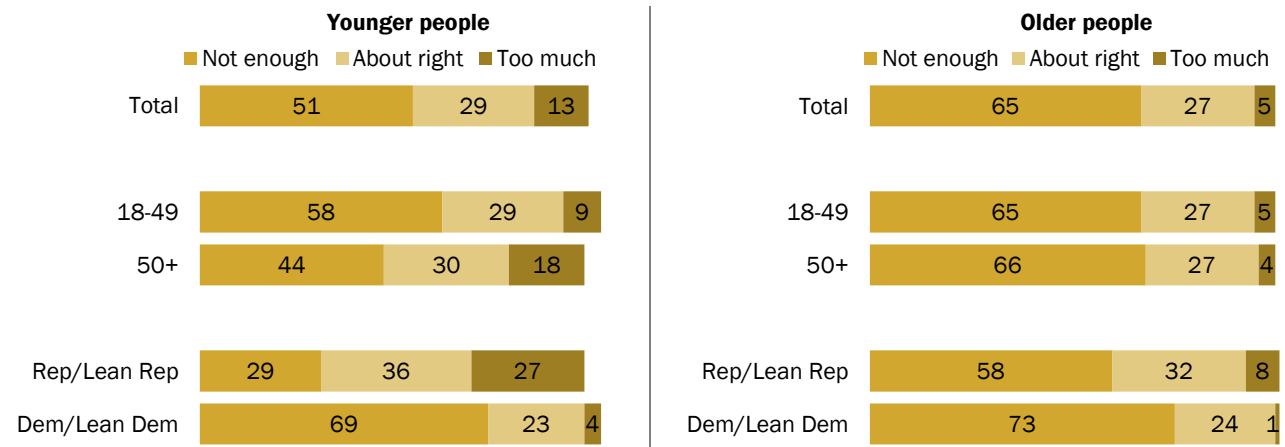
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The partisan gap is much wider in views of government help for younger people. Nearly seven-in-ten Democrats (69%) say the federal government does not provide enough help for younger people. Republicans are divided: Nearly equal shares say the government does too little (29%) and too much (27%) for younger people, while 36% say it provides about the right amount of help.

In addition, there are sizable age differences in views of government help for younger people – but not in how much the government does for older people. A majority of those younger than 50 (58%) say the government does not do enough for younger people, compared with 44% of those 50 and older. Nearly identical shares of those under 50 (65%) and those 50 and older (66%) say the federal government does not do enough for older people.

### More than twice as many Democrats as Republicans say the federal government does not provide enough help for younger people

*How much help does the federal government provide to each group? (%)*



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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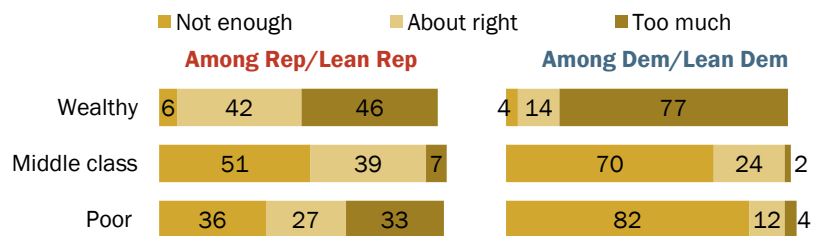
## Views of government help for poor, wealthy, middle class

The partisan divide in views of government aid for the poor is wider than for other groups. Fully 82% of Democrats say the federal government does not provide enough help for poor people, compared with just 36% of Republicans. About as many Republicans say the government does too much for the poor (33%) as say it does too little; 27% say the help the government provides is about right.

Pew Research Center's recent report on the public's political values found that partisan differences in attitudes about aid to the poor and needy have widened considerably over the past two decades. [In that study](#), 71% of Democrats said the government should do more to help the needy even if it meant going deeper in debt, compared with 24% of Republicans.

### Republicans and Democrats differ on whether govt provides too little help for poor, too much for wealthy

*How much help does the federal government provide to each group? (%)*



Note: Don't know responses not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Democrats and Republicans also differ in their attitudes about the help the government provides to wealthy people. A large majority of Democrats (77%) say the federal government provides too much help to the wealthy. As with views about government help to the poor, Republicans are divided. Nearly half of Republicans (46%) say the federal government provides too much help for wealthy people, 42% say it provides about the right amount, while 6% say it does not provide enough help.

Partisan differences in opinions about the federal government's help for the middle class are not as pronounced. Seven-in-ten Democrats say the government does not provide enough help for the middle class, compared with about half of Republicans (51%).

Republican attitudes about government help to the poor, middle class and wealthy differ significantly by family income. Democratic opinions vary much less across income levels.

Nearly half of Republicans with incomes under \$40,000 (47%) say that the government does not provide enough assistance for poor people. This is considerably higher than those who make

between \$40,000 and \$75,000 or \$75,000 or more; only about three-in-ten in these income brackets say that poor people do not receive enough assistance (32% and 28%, respectively).

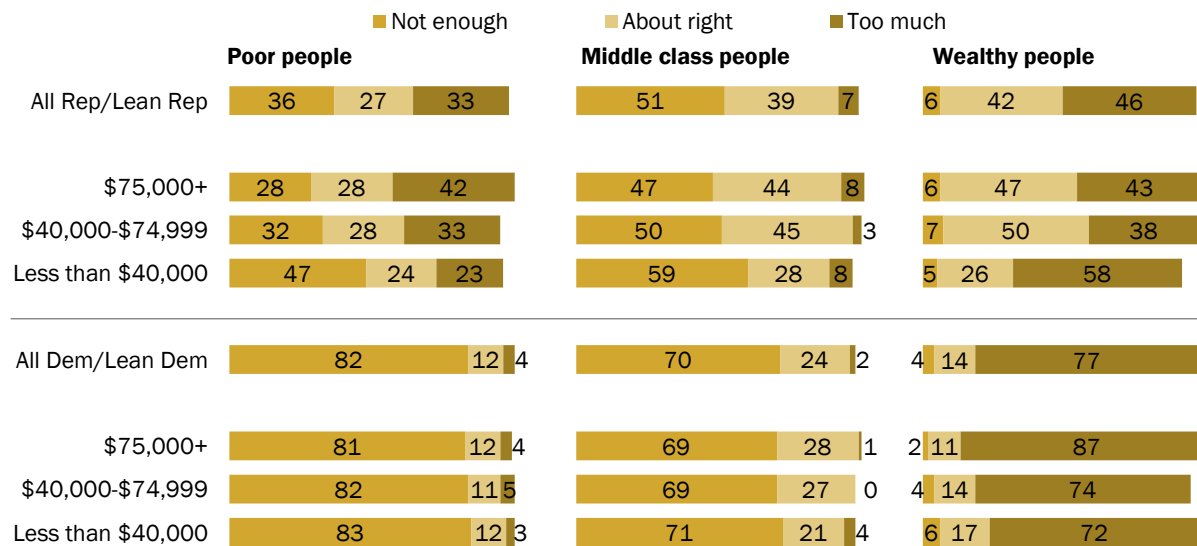
A similar pattern is seen on opinions about government help for the middle class. A majority (59%) of lower-income Republicans say the middle class does not receive enough help. That compares with about half of Republicans with higher family incomes.

And while 58% of Republicans with incomes of less than \$40,000 say the government provides too much help to wealthy people, only about four-in-ten (41%) of those with incomes of \$40,000 or more say the same.

Large majorities of Democrats across income categories say the federal government does not provide enough help for the poor and middle class, and that it provides too much help for the wealthy.

## Republicans divided by income in views of government help for the poor, middle class and wealthy

*How much help does the federal government provide to each group? (%)*



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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## Acknowledgements

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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## Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted January 10-15, 2018 among a national sample of 1,503 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (376 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,127 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 718 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers under the direction of Abt Associates. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2016 Census Bureau's American Community Survey one-year estimates and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2016 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.



The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

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*Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018*

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,503	2.9 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	593	4.7 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	768	4.1 percentage points

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

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JANUARY 2018 POLITICAL SURVEY  
FINAL TOPLINE  
JANUARY 10-15, 2018  
N=1,503**

**QUESTIONS 1-2, 5-8, 11a, 12-16 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**NO QUESTIONS 3-4, 9-10, 11b, 17-27**

**QUESTIONS 11c-e HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.28 Next, we'd like to ask you about how much help the federal government provides to some different groups. First, do you think the government does too much, not enough, or about the right amount for **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**? What about **[NEXT ITEM]**? **[IF NECESSARY: does the government do too much, not enough, or about the right amount for ITEM?]**

	<u>Too much</u>	<u>Not enough</u>	<u>About the right amount</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Older people				
Jan 10-15, 2018	5	65	27	3
Dec 8-13, 2015	3	66	28	3
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	6	60	32	3

**NO ITEM b**

c. Wealthy people				
Jan 10-15, 2018	64	5	25	6
Dec 8-13, 2015	61	9	24	5
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	64	8	22	6
d. Poor people				
Jan 10-15, 2018	15	62	19	4
Dec 8-13, 2015	16	59	21	4
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	18	57	22	3
e. Middle class people				
Jan 10-15, 2018	4	61	30	4
Dec 8-13, 2015	6	62	29	3
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	7	58	31	4
f. Younger people				
Jan 10-15, 2018	13	51	29	6

**QUESTIONS 30, 39b-c, 40-45, 49-50, 53-56, 72-73, 80-82, 90 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**NO QUESTIONS 29, 31-38, A1, A5, 46-48, 51-52, J23-J28, 57-71, 74-79, 83-89**

**QUESTIONS 39a, A2-A4, J22, J29, A6-A8 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

**ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean <u>Rep</u>	Lean <u>Dem</u>
Jan 10-15, 2018	26	33	34	3	1	3	12	18
Nov 29-Dec 4, 2017	20	32	40	4	1	3	13	19
Oct 25-30, 2017	22	32	41	3	1	2	17	19
Jun 8-Jul 9, 2017	25	31	39	3	1	2	16	18
Apr 5-11, 2017	24	31	42	2	1	*	17	20
Feb 7-12, 2017	23	34	37	3	1	2	15	18
Jan 4-9, 2017	25	28	41	4	*	1	18	19
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2017	23.6	31.4	39.4	3.3	.6	1.7	15.8	18.7
2016	25.4	32.0	36.5	3.4	.5	2.2	14.6	17.0
2015	23.7	30.4	40.1	3.6	.4	1.8	16.4	17.3
2014	23.2	31.5	39.5	3.1	.7	2.0	16.2	16.5
2013	23.9	32.1	38.3	2.9	.5	2.2	16.0	16.0
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--