

The Economic Future for Non-College Women is Bleak

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1. Introduction

Technology is slated to have significant impacts on what jobs will see notable growth and decline over the next decade. Gendered differences across occupations mean men and women will be impacted differently by these predicted changes in the labor market in the United States. Additionally, the educational attainment of workers directly affects their opportunities in the workforce. Understanding the potential impacts of these labor market shifts on women, specifically those without a college degree (which I define as a U.S. four-year degree), is key to shaping effective policy.

2. Research Question

What does the future of work look like for women without a college degree?

3. Methods

Using both projection and employment data from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics this research looks at the occupations anticipated to see the largest gains and losses in employment in the United States to better understand the labor market impacts. I categorized occupations as low-wage, middle-wage, or high-wage based on Pew Research's definition of middle-class income, defining a middle-wage job as any U.S. occupation providing two-thirds of full-time median earnings to two times median earnings (approx. \$36,700 to \$110,100). I defined non-college as any level of education below a U.S. four-year degree, and college as anything at or above. Then I evaluated the impacts of job loss and gain on women and men, and more specifically on non-college women.

4. Results and Discussion

» Over the next decade, 97% of the jobs lost will be ones that don't require a bachelor's degree, with 68% of those being jobs currently held by women.

Figure 1. Occupations with Largest Predicted Job Losses in the Next Decade

Predicted Job Loss Predicted Job Loss to Women

	Occupation	Median Annual Wage
Low-Wage	Cashiers	\$28,240.00
	Cooks, fast food	\$27,640.00
Middle-Wage	Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive	\$41,000.00
	Office clerks, general	\$38,040.00
	Customer service representatives	\$37,780.00
	Miscellaneous assemblers and fabricators	\$37,280.00
	Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	\$45,860.00
	Executive secretaries and administrative assistants	\$65,980.00
	First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	\$45,250.00
First-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers	\$61,370.00	

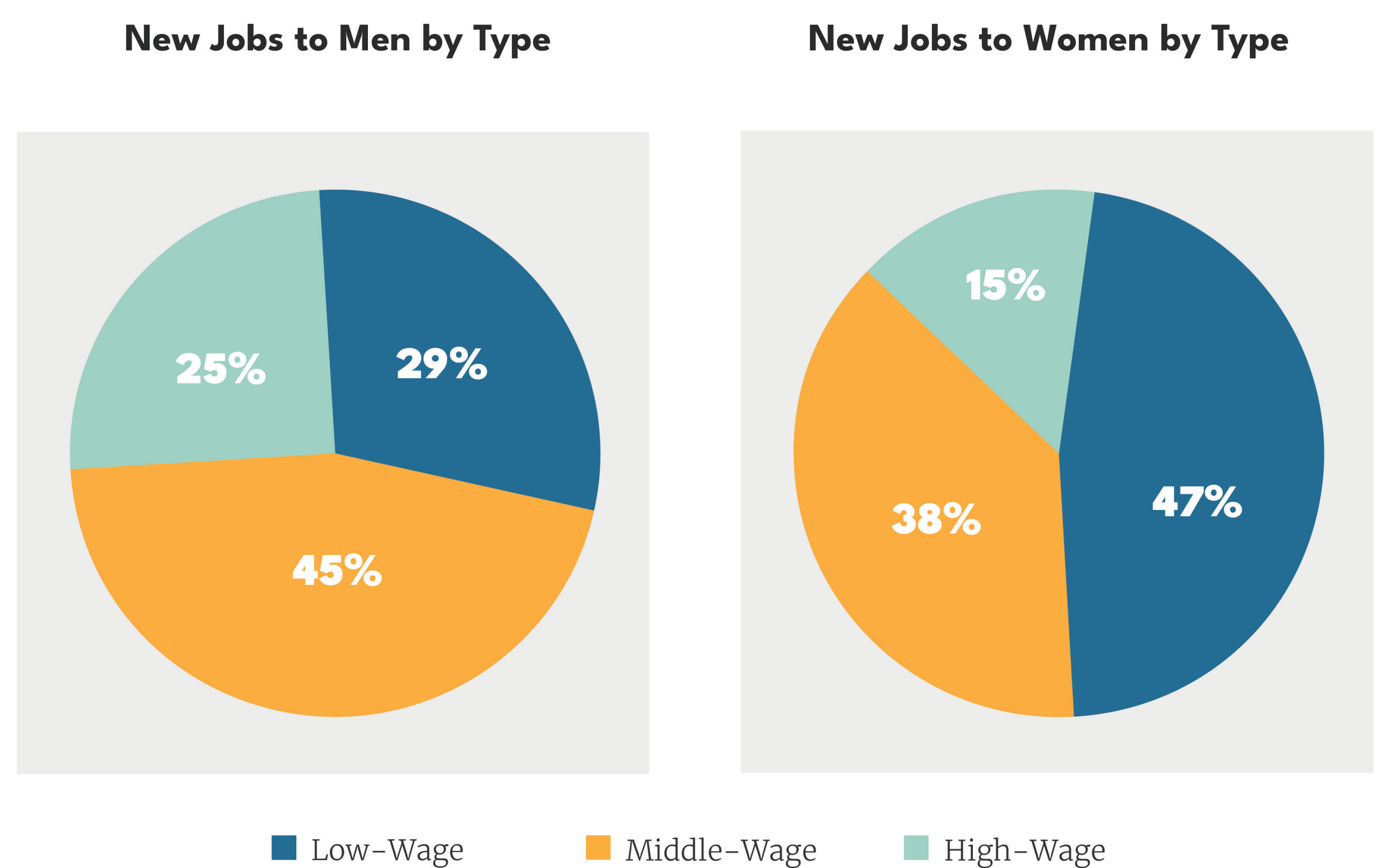
» There will be a significant decline in available jobs in office and administrative work—a field which has historically provided non-college women with a pathway to well-paying and high-quality careers.

Figure 2. Predicted Middle-Wage Job Losses by Gender
Based on the top 30 industries with largest predicted job losses



» Job growth for non-college women will be concentrated in the lowest paying-sectors of the economy. Within industries expected to see the largest growth, 47% of new jobs created set to go to women will be in low-wage occupations and just 15% will be in high-wage ones.

Figure 3.

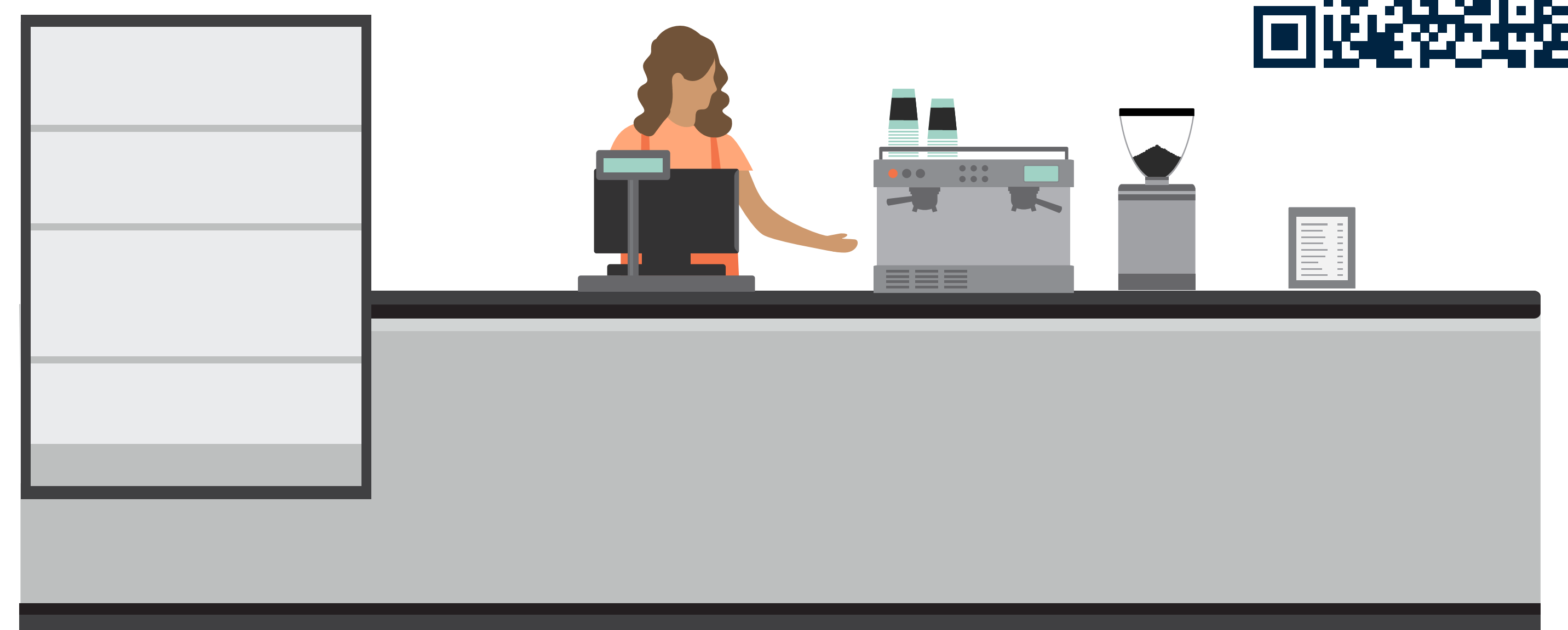


5. Future Directions

In addressing the potential negative impacts to non-college women caused by anticipated labor market shifts, policymakers should consider two key questions.

- How might policymakers better help non-college women move into higher-paying fields currently dominated by men?
- How might policymakers improve the quality and pay of female-dominated occupations, specifically those in the care economy?

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Source: (Figure 1) Author's analysis of "Employment by major occupational group." Employment Projections, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 6 Sep. 2023, <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/emp-by-major-occupational-group.htm>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023. And; "Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity." Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 25 Jan. 2023, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023. And; Kochnar, Rakesh and Stella Sechopoulos. "How the American middle class has changed in the past five decades." Pew Research Center, 20 Apr. 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/04/20/how-the-american-middle-class-has-changed-in-the-past-five-decades/>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023. (Figure 2) Author's analysis of "Employment by major occupational group." Employment Projections, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 6 Sep. 2023, <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/emp-by-major-occupational-group.htm>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023. And; "Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity." Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 25 Jan. 2023, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023. And; Kochnar, Rakesh and Stella Sechopoulos. "How the American middle class has changed in the past five decades." Pew Research Center, 20 Apr. 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/04/20/how-the-american-middle-class-has-changed-in-the-past-five-decades/>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023. (Figure 3) Author's analysis of "Employment by major occupational group." Employment Projections, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 6 Sep. 2023, <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/emp-by-major-occupational-group.htm>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023. And; "Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity." Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 25 Jan. 2023, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023. And; Kochnar, Rakesh and Stella Sechopoulos. "How the American middle class has changed in the past five decades." Pew Research Center, 20 Apr. 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/04/20/how-the-american-middle-class-has-changed-in-the-past-five-decades/>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2023.