# Economic Mobility and Public Opinion

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# How does economic mobility relate to partisan identification?

- Motivating observation
  - A fair number of people with modest incomes consistently vote for the economically conservative party
  - A fair number of people with higher incomes consistently vote for the economically more redistributive party
- Yet public perception of the parties as distinctly different on economic issues is long-standing and established

# Divergent perceptions of US political parties

- Nicholson and Segura, 2012

- ANES data 1972-2004

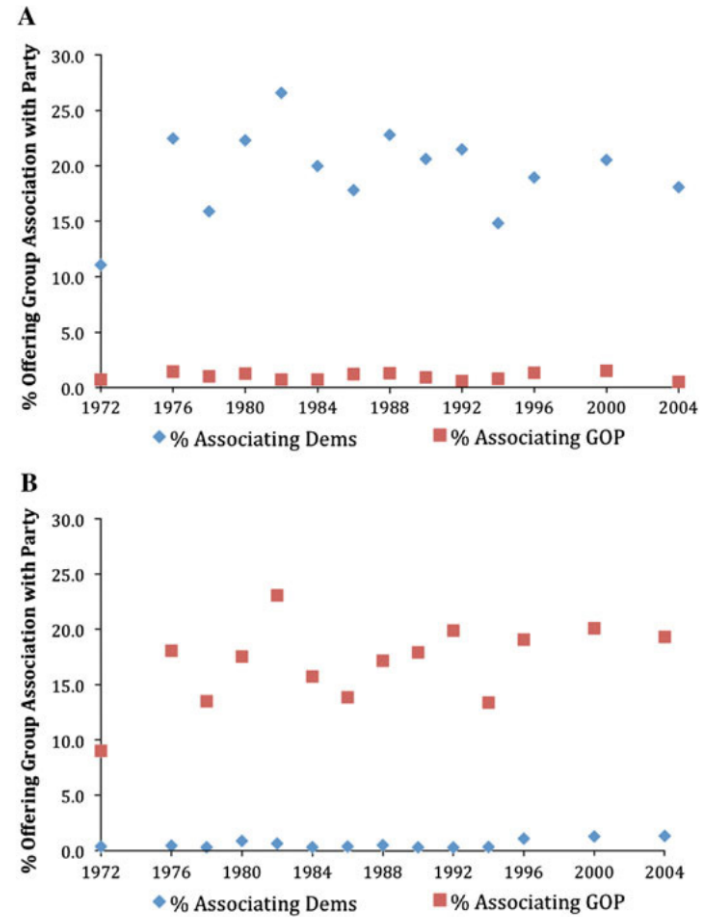- Stable perceptions of the parties as fundamentally different in who their policies benefit



Fig. 1 The social class basis of party images. a The party of the "common man" or "poor". b The party of "big business," the "upper class," or "rich"

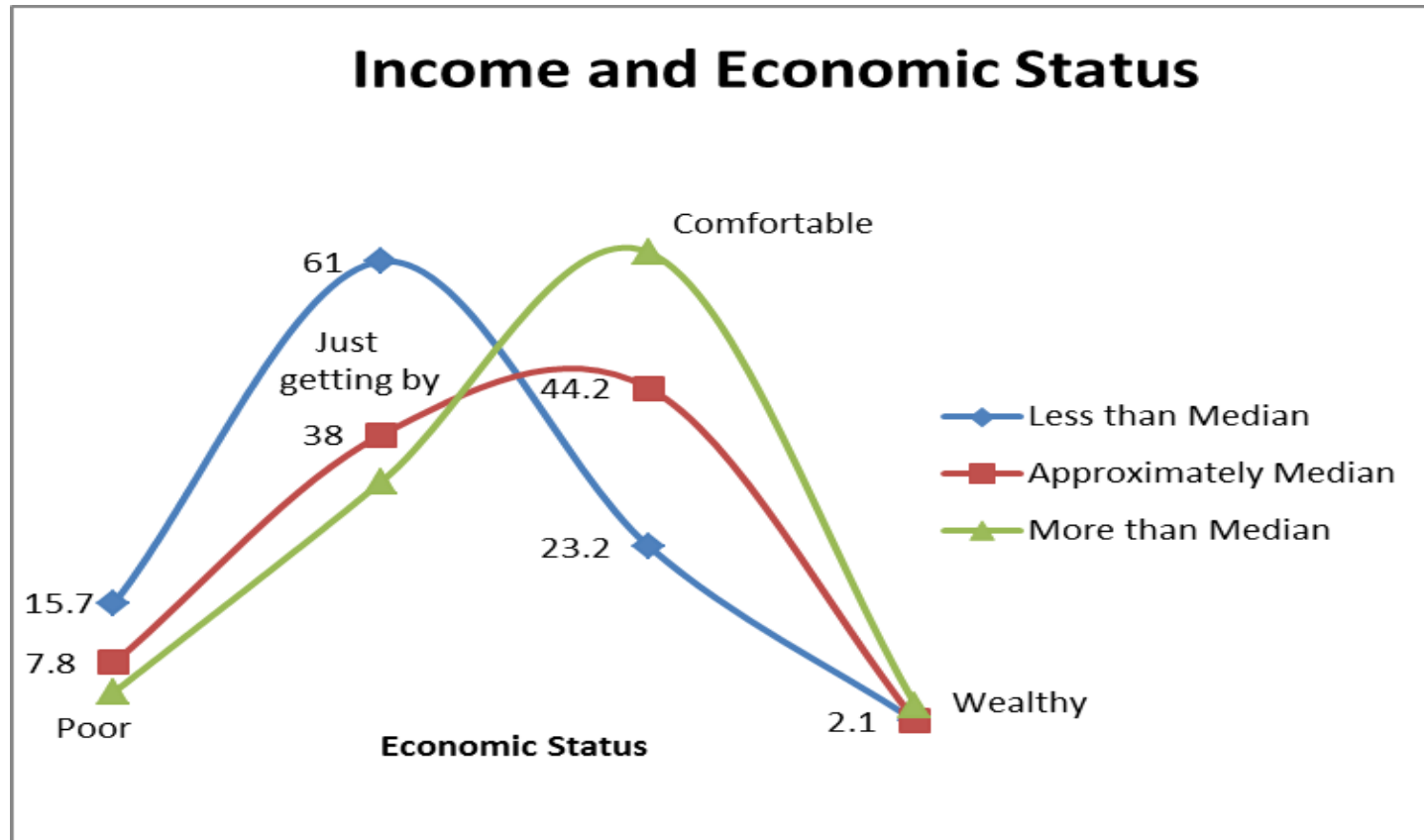# What is the role of changes in financial status?

- Would the partisan identification of people whose status was different in their past or people who expect their status to be different in the future be impacted?
  - o Poorer or richer in the past
  - o Poorer or richer (in expectation) in the future
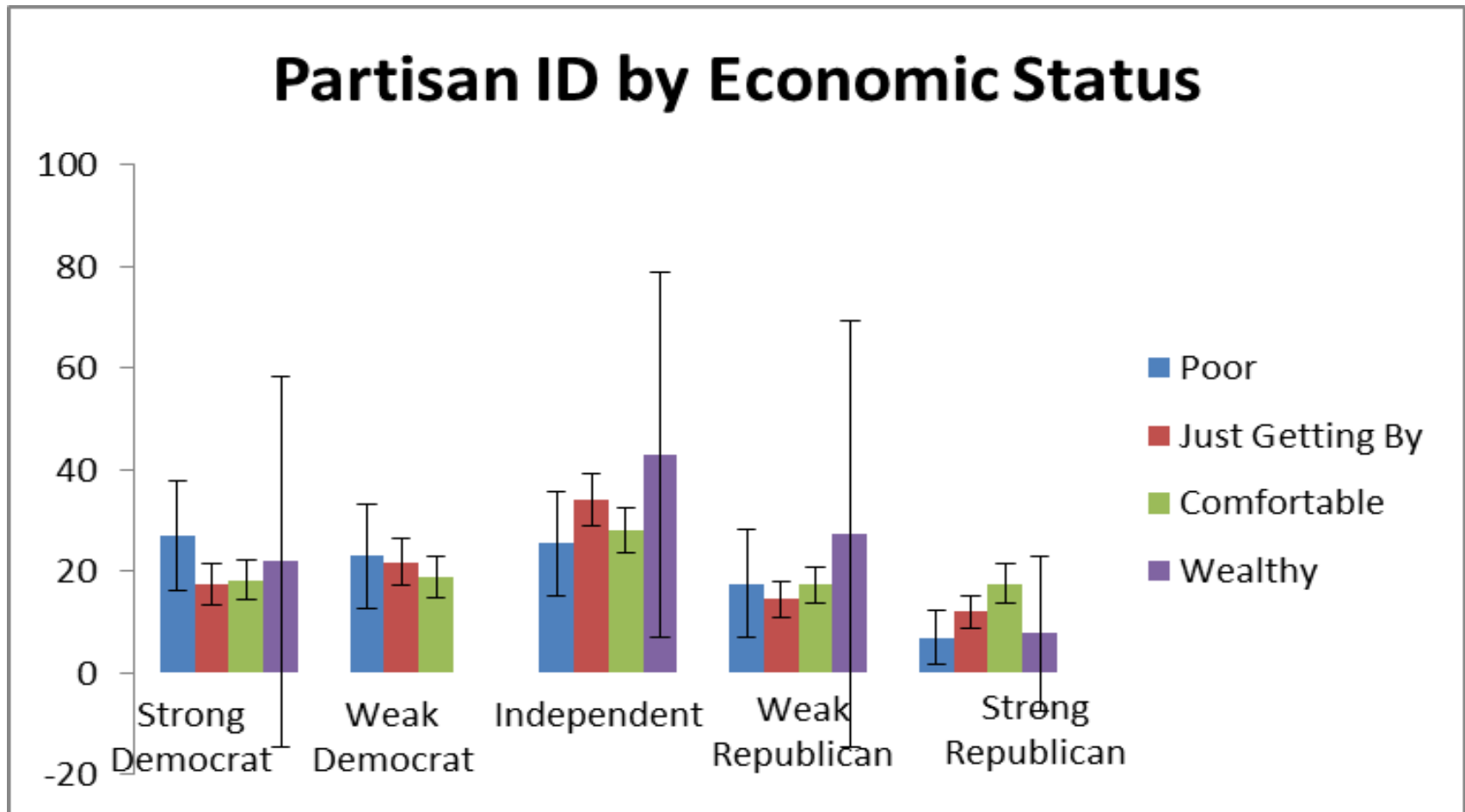
# We included the following questions

| How would you describe your personal finances? In terms of money… | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Poor | Just getting by | Comfortable | Wealthy |
| how are you doing now? | o | o | o | o |
| where were you 10 years ago, in 2001? | o | o | o | o |
| what is the worst-off you have ever been? | o | o | o | o |
| what is the best-off you have ever been? | o | o | o | o |

- How likely is it that you will stay financially poor/just getting by/comfortable/wealthy for the rest of your life?

- How likely is it that you will ever be (ONE STEP DOWN) at some time in the future?

- How likely is it that you will ever be (ONE STEP UP) at some time in the future?

- How likely is it that you will ever be poor at some time in the future?

- How likely is it that you will ever be wealthy at some time in the future?

    o   Not likely at all

    o   A little likely

    o   Moderately likely

    o   Very likely

    o   Extremely likely

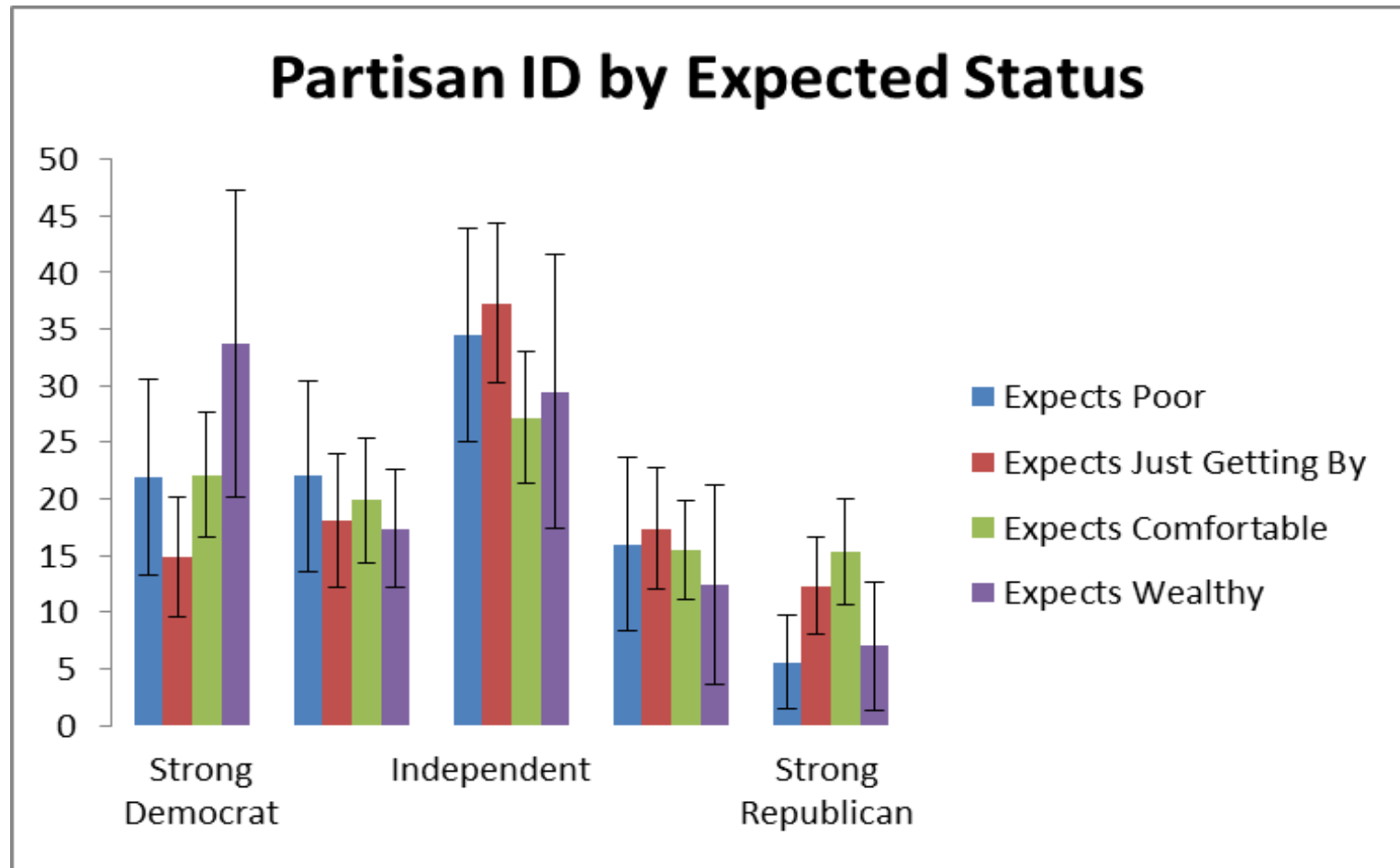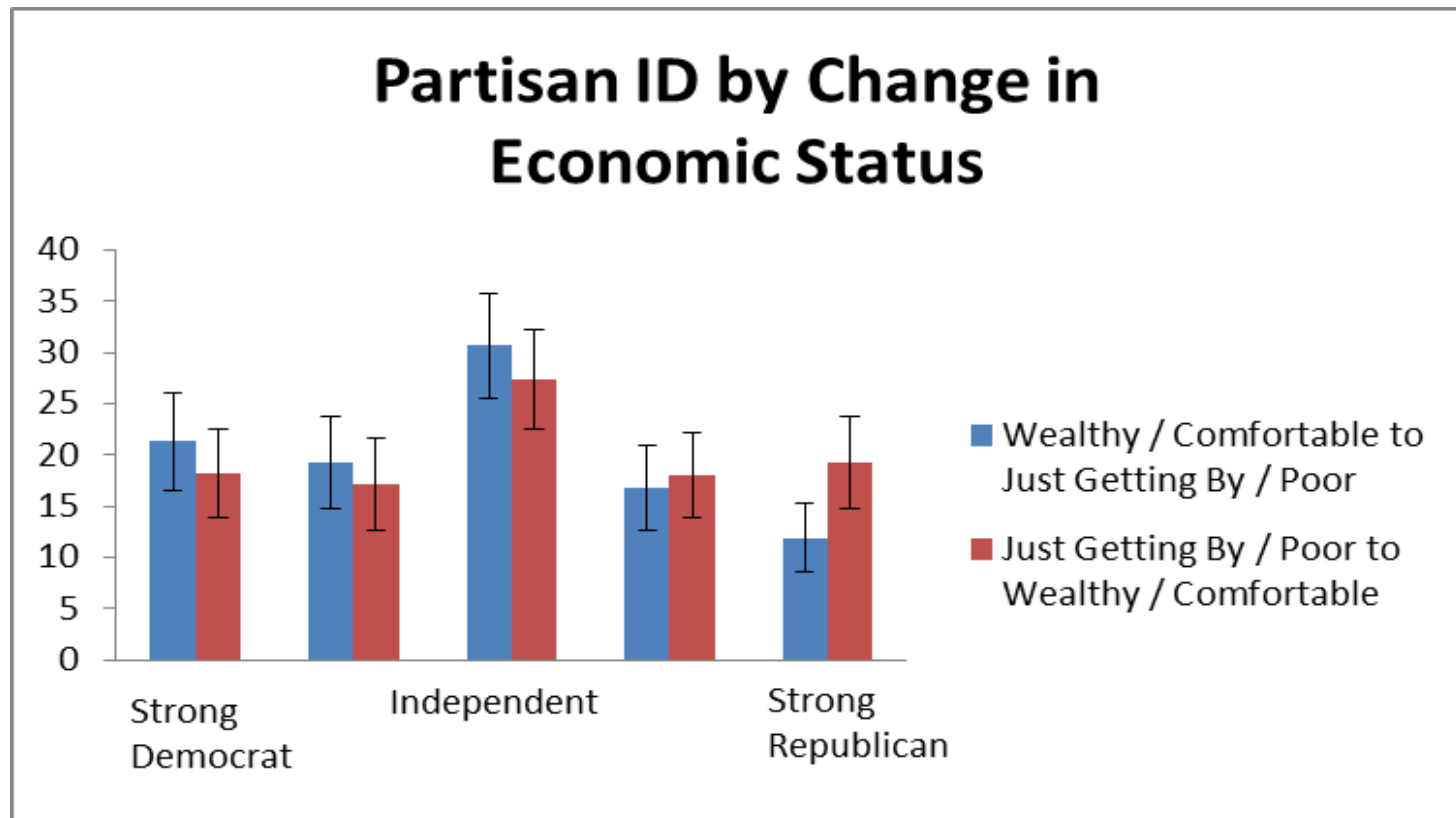# Reported Financial Status Correlates with Relative Income

# Little Relationship between Financial Status and Party ID



**Partisan ID by Economic Status**

# Expected Financial Status and Party ID

# Change from Past Financial Status and Party ID

# So what distinguishes wealthy Democrats and poor Republicans?

| Variables | Rich Democrat | Non-rich Democrat | Non-poor Republican | Poor Republican |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 48.2 | 45.4 | 47.5 | 53.7 |
| Interest in Politics | 2.5 | 3.2 | 2.8 | 2.3 |
| Percent Metropolitan | 85.8% | 87.5% | 81.6% | 64.6% |
| Median Education | BA or higher | Some College | Some College | Some College |
| Percent White | 57.4% | 56.1% | 89.1% | 83.5% |
| Percent Black | 28.9% | 22.6% | 1.1% | |
| Percent Hispanic | 8.0% | 14.3% | 6.4% | 9.8% |
| Percent Female | 57.1% | 56.8% | 45.9% | 43.4% |
| Median Religious Attendance | A few times a year | A few times a year | Once or twice a month | Once a week |

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# Are there differences by financial status on issue beliefs?

- Which of these do you think is the most important issue facing the United States today?
- Ten possible answers, and the same three were the top three for each group

|  | The Budget Deficit | The Economy | Unemployment |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rich Democrats | 12.3% | 46.4% | 23.2% |
| Non-rich Democrats | 13.7% | 43.8% | 29.2% |
| Non-poor Republicans | 31.6% | 48.7% | 8.7% |
| Poor Republicans | 41.8% | 35.5% | 7.2% |

# How do beliefs about specific policies relate to financial status and party ID?

- Would this be good, bad, or neither good nor bad **for you personally**?
- Would this be good, bad, or neither good nor bad **for the country**?
- Replace medicaid with credits
- Raise the minimum wage
- Increase taxes on people making over $250K
- Increase taxes on corporations
- Replace social security with private retirement accounts
- Reduce US federal government spending on everything

# Beliefs about policy benefits for the country predict party identification

| Party Identification predicted using ordered logit estimation | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Personal Benefit | | Country Benefit | |
| | coefficient | std error | coefficient | std error |
| Replace medicare with credits | -0.03 | 0.06 | -0.07 | 0.06 |
| Raise minimum wage | 0.17** | 0.06 | 0.11** | 0.05 |
| Increase taxes on people making over $250K | -0.06 | 0.06 | 0.21** | 0.05 |
| Increase taxes on corporations | 0.1 | 0.06 | 0.13** | 0.05 |
| Replace social security with private retirement accounts | 0.01 | 0.05 | -0.04 | 0.05 |
| Reduce federal government spending on everything | -0.05 | 0.06 | -0.24** | 0.05 |
| ** Indicates the estimated coefficient is statistically significant at p=.05 | | | | |

# Conclusions

- Financial status and changes in financial status (both past changes and expected future changes) have virtually no relationship with partisan identification

- Partisan identification is predicted by people's beliefs about what policies are good for the country, not for themselves personally

# We hope to include revised financial status questions in EGSS5

| How would you describe your personal finances?  In terms of money… | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A lot more than I need | A little more than I need | The right amount for my needs | A little less than I need | A lot less than I need |
| how much do you have these days? | o | o | o | o | o |
| how much will you probably have in 10 years? | o | o | o | o | o |
| what is the least you have ever had? | o | o | o | o | o |
| what is the most you have ever had? | o | o | o | o | o |

# We also hope to include a question about class in EGSS5

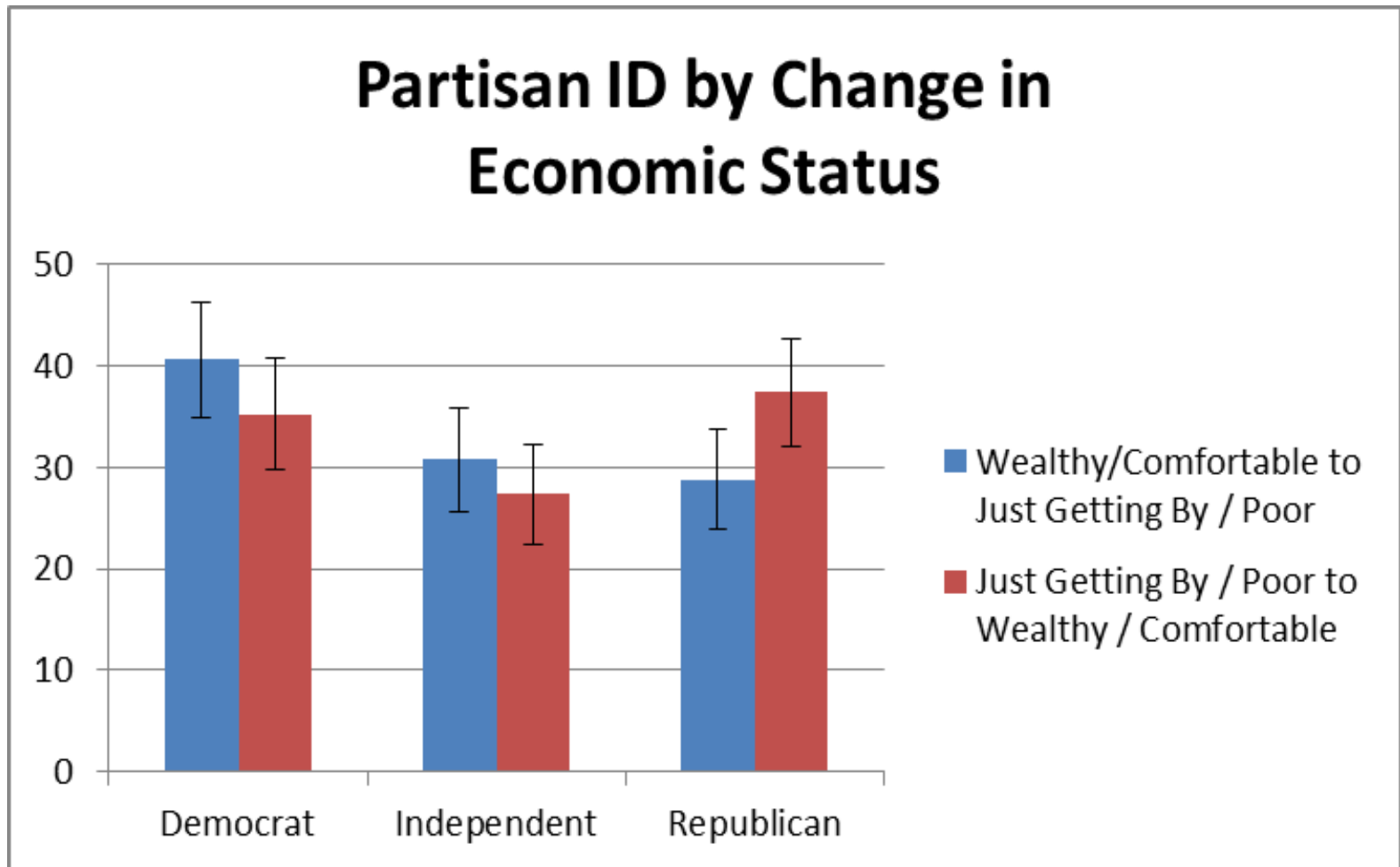How would you describe your social class?  Are you in the lower class, the middle class, or the upper class?

| | |
|---|---|
| o | lower class |
| o | lower middle class |
| o | middle class |
| o | upper middle class |
| o | upper class |

# Change from Past Financial Status and Party ID

# Relationship Between Financial Status and Party ID