

Economic enigma: Why the pain persists, even as incomes rise

By Patricia Cohen, New York Times

Incomes are up. Poverty is down. And job openings have hit a record high. But if the economy is so wonderful, why are so many Americans still feeling left behind?

The disconnect between positive statistics and people's day-to-day lives is one of the great economic and social puzzles of recent years. It helped fuel President Donald Trump's political rise and underpins the frustrations that played out in calls to build a Mexican border wall, reopen trade agreements and bring back well-paid work in coal mines and factories.

When the U.S. Census Bureau released its annual report on the country's economic well-being recently, it showed unmistakable progress: For the second year in a row, household incomes – clobbered by the 2007-09 recession – had grown. More Americans were working, and more had health insurance, in 2016 than the year before.

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