ownership from 69% in 2005 to about 66.5% in 2010, and an increase in renter households of 1.1 million (Hoak, 2011). Americans are scrutinizing their spending habits more intensely, as shown in a survey completed in 2009 showing that approximately two-thirds of Americans have permanently changed their spending habits as a result of the Great Recession and that one-fourth hope to save more money for the future (Frietchen, 2009).

Looking at the fragile economy today, it is tempting to focus on the unevenness of the recovery: the stock market has made impressive rebounds in recent months, but the unemployment rate remains high. Thanks to bailouts for large corporations and stimulus measures intended to generate growth, economic activity seems to be on its way towards pre-recession levels, but the economy remains fragile. Weak national real estate markets, sluggish job growth, and the slow recovery of liquid assets lost during the recession are obstacles to a full recovery.

To many, the most worrisome problem is inequality: that wealth is concentrated into the hands of a rich minority. One economist, Robert Reich, even says that "As long as income and wealth keep concentrating at the top, and the great divide between America's have-mores and have-lesses continues to widen, the Great Recession won't end, at least not in the real economy" (Reich, 2009). The essence of Reich's argument is that Wall Street will effectively deter any meaningful recovery on Main Street. Another economist, Paul Krugman, holds a similar position, writing that "The lion's share of economic growth in America over the past thirty years has gone to a small, wealthy minority," and that "the lack of clear economic progress for lower and middle income families is in itself an important reason to seek a more equal distribution of income" (2007). Krugman believes that the American Dream is no