Breadcrumbs – Episode 32: Scarcity is Obsolete

Introduction: Hello, my name is Kevin Howard, host of Breadcrumbs…a podcast for people who know ‘it is not working.’ Welcome to Episode 32 where I will focus our conversation on one of the most impactful myths of modern life…Scarcity. For those of us who grew up in the United States or virtually anywhere in the global north, scarcity was a reality we accepted that primarily existed on the edge of our lived experience. We were blessed to have the benefits of modernity…food, clean water, shelter, sanitation and more. Yet increasingly over the last several years scarcity has moved beyond aspirational limits to impact our access to the essential goods and services we need to take care of ourselves and our family.

In previous episodes of Breadcrumbs, I have discussed how we arrived here. I will put the links in the notes of this episode. In this episode, I will discuss what resources we need to live an abundant life, what resources we have in America to provide for an abundant life, and who possesses the current resources available in America.

We start the conversation with **Breadcrumb #1: What is Abundance?**

Abundance includes the resources required for a household to live without precarity, with dignity, health and opportunity.

Precarity - a state of persistent insecurity with regard to employment or income.

Resources needed for abundance:

- Housing that is safe, stable, and appropriately sized.
- Nutritious food and clean water sufficient to support wellness.
- Healthcare that is accessible when needed.
- Transportation that is reliable.
- Utilities that do not get shut off.
- Education that opens doors.
- Childcare that allows parents to work.
- Emergency savings so predictable expenses do not lead to a financial catastrophe.

Based on a comprehensive analysis conducted by Claude.ai – Opus 4.7, the total resource value for an abundant life for a family of four is approximately $110,000 per year in 2023 dollars.

In 2010, Nobel Prize-winning economists Daniel Kahneman and Angus Deaton published groundbreaking research showing that emotional well-being—day-to-day happiness—increases with income but ‘plateaus at approximately $75,000 per year’. Beyond that threshold, additional money didn't reduce emotional pain or increase happiness. Adjusted for inflation, that 2010 threshold translates to approximately $110,000 in 2026 dollars

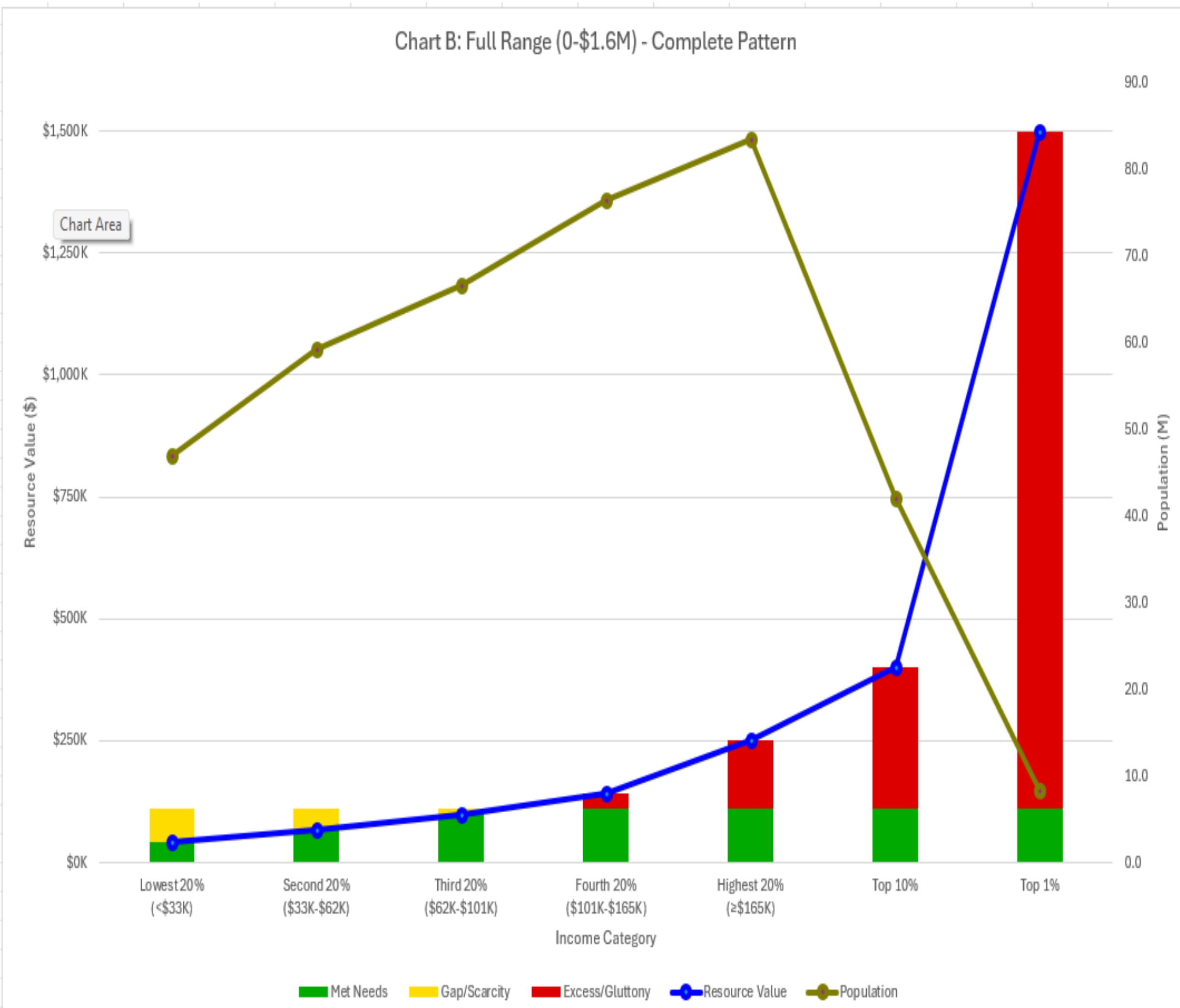
An updated study published in 2023 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences concluded:

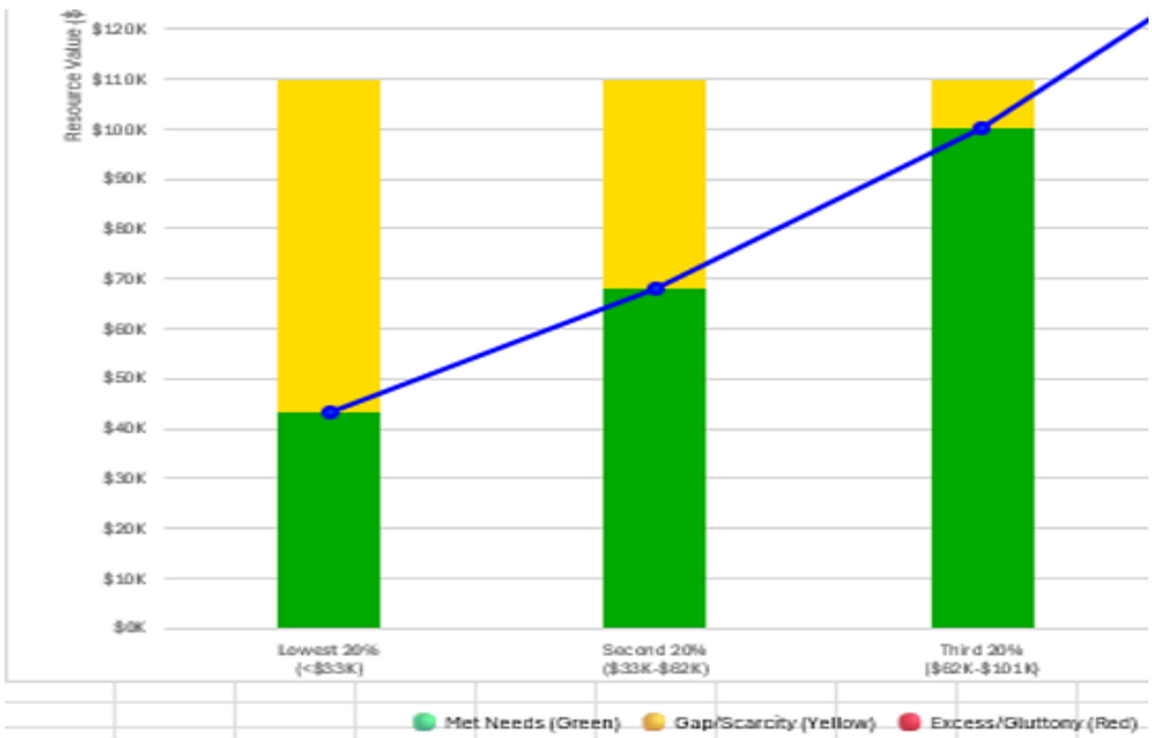
" For the unhappiest 15% of people—those dealing with real hardship—emotional well-being plateaus at around $100,000 per year. Beyond that income, more money doesn't help because their problems aren't resource problems anymore."

Breadcrumbs #2: Physical and emotional abundance is optimal at $110,000 at current prices.

There are approximately 330 million people in the United States. Does America have enough resources to allow all Americans to live an abundant life?

U.S. Resource Distribution by Income Level





A comprehensive analysis conducted by Claude.ai – Opus 4.7 assessed the value of resources possessed by American household categorized by income levels:

- Botton 20% [<$33k]: Resource value = $43k; Resource gap = $67k
- 2nd lowest 20% [<=$62k]: Resource value = $68k; Resource gap = $42k
- Middle 20% [<=$101k]: Resource value = $100k; Resource gap = $10k
- 2nd highest 20% [<=$165k]: Resource value = $143k; Excess Resource = $33k
- Top 20% [<=$300k]: Resource value = $250k; Excess Resource = $140k
- Top 10% [<=$659k]: Resource value = $400k; Excess Resource = $290k
- Top 1% [>660k]: Resource value = $1,500k; Excess Resource = $1,390k

The resource distribution pattern is reflected in every essential resource category:

- Housing
  - 15.6 million vacant housing units exist while 650,000 are homeless
  - Bottom 20% has a 47.1% homeownership rate vs. Top 20% of 81%
  - Half of all renters [22.6 million] spend over 30% of income on housing
- Food
  - U.S. produces 3,800-4,000 calories per person daily [2x need]
  - Up to 40% of all food [106 million tons] in U.S. is wasted
  - 44 million Americans experience food insecurity
- Wealth
  - Top 1% holds 30.5% of all U.S. wealth
  - Bottom 50% holds 2.5%

- Healthcare
    - $4.9T in annual spending; 1.1M Doctors
    - 27.6M are uninsured; 100m carrying medical debt [#1 reason for BK]

The Abundant Life Denied

Bottom 20% [<$33k]

They possess 39% of what they need. For renters in this income bracket after paying housing costs, they have only $250 per month left for all other necessities—food, healthcare, transportation, utilities, everything.

2nd Lowest 20% [<=$62k]

The highest number of American households earn between $50k and $55k per year. They possess 62% of what they need to live without resource scarcity.

Let's talk about what that $10,000 gap actually means for the Middle 20%.

You're a family of four with household income of around $80,000. You're doing everything "right"—working full-time, paying bills, saving what you can. You're not poor by official standards. You're "middle class." According to BLS Consumer Expenditure Survey data (2024), the average American household spends $78,535 annually on housing (33.4%), transportation (17%), food (12.9%), insurance & retirement (12.9%), and healthcare (7.9%). You're managing all of that. Barely.

But you're $10,000 short of abundance. And that gap is everything.

It's the difference between fixing the car when it breaks down and hoping it lasts another month. Between taking your kid to the dentist when they complain about tooth pain and waiting to see if it gets worse. Between having three months of emergency savings and living paycheck to paycheck. Between "we can handle this" and "one more thing and we're underwater."

They live one moderate crisis away from precarity at all times.

Breadcrumb #3: The bottom 60% of American household earners or 176M people live with persistent precarity.

Yet, this is absolutely not necessary.

The top 40% of American household earners possess total excess resources above the abundance threshold valued at $29.8T while the total resource shortfall for the bottom 60% of American household earners is valued at $6.3T.

Breadcrumb #4: America has enough resources to make every household in America resource abundant and still have $23T is excess resources.

Income	US Pop	Universal Abundance Income (UAI) Per HH Surplus(Gap)	Total Surplus (Gap)
Top 1%	8400000	$1,390,000	$11,676,000,000,000
Top 10%	33600000	$290,000	$9,744,000,000,000
Top 20% net	41500000	$140,000	$5,810,000,000,000
2nd H 20%	76400000	$33,000	$2,521,200,000,000
Middle 20%	66600000	($10,000)	($666,000,000,000)
2nd L 20%	59200000	($42,000)	($2,486,400,000,000)
Bottom 20%	47000000	($67,000)	($3,149,000,000,000)
U.S. Excess Abundance	332700000	$1,734,000	$23,449,800,000,000
	UAI Tax		
Gluttony Cap 1%	**30%**	$973,000	$8,173,200,000,000
Gluttony Cap 10%	**20%**	$232,000	$7,795,200,000,000
Gluttony Cap 20% Net	**15%**	$119,000	$4,938,500,000,000
UAI			**$6,323,100,000,000**
Bottom 60%			**$21,700,000,000**

There has been much discussion about establishing Universal Basic Income to offset the loss of income experienced by lower income households. This idea is wholly inadequate to alleviate the financial precarity experienced by the bottom 60% of household earners in America.

We need to establish Universal Abundance Income.

And we can easily afford it by imposing an excess resource tax:

- Top 1% = 30%
- Top 10% [net of top 1%] = 20%
- Top 20% [net of top 10%] = 15%

This tax will generate $6.3T annually in Universal Abundance Income for the bottom 60% of U.S. households completely eliminating financial precarity in America.

Yes, this is a radical idea, but we are experiencing a housing affordability crisis causing food insecurity in the richest country on Earth. We can fix this.

UAI is the path forward.