KEY FACTS ABOUT INCOME, WEALTH & TAXES

NOTE: There are many measures of American wealth and many ways of estimating those measures. This fact sheet uses the most current, accessible and reputable sources available for each data point, which in some cases leads to inconsistencies between studies, such as in the years covered. Also because of the multiplicity of wealth studies, figures here may differ slightly from those found in other reports using different, equally valid collections of sources. Despite such differences, the trend of increasing concentration of wealth among a tiny elite portrayed here and elsewhere is unmistakable.

WHO ARE THE RICHEST 0.1% IN AMERICA?

- The richest 0.1% own more than the bottom 80% of American households. [Washington Post from Zucman, World Inequality Database¹]

- The 400 richest Americans own more than the bottom 150 million Americans. [Washington Post]² The richest 400 have a combined wealth of $3 trillion. [Forbes³]

- Just three men alone—Jeff Bezos, Warren Buffett and Bill Gates—have as much wealth as the whole bottom half of society. [PolitiFact⁴]

- The wealth of a household in the richest 0.1% is at least $32 million in 2019. [Saez and Zucman⁵]

- The annual income of a taxpayer in the richest 0.1% is about $2.4 million in 2019. There are about 141,000 taxpayers in the top 0.1%. [Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data⁶]

- The growth in Walton family wealth, the major shareholders behind Walmart, swelled by $39 billion in the last year, topping out at $191 billion in 2019. Their fortune increased by $70,000 per minute, $4 million per hour, $100 million per day. By comparison, a new Walmart associate makes about an $11 hourly minimum wage. [Bloomberg⁷]

- The total share of national wealth held by the richest 0.1% families increased from 9% in 1985 to nearly 20% in 2016. That’s nearly as big a slice of the pie as is claimed by the bottom 90%, which during the same period saw their share of wealth decline from 37% to about 25%. [See chart below, Saez and Zucman⁸]
• In 2018, the 400 wealthiest Americans paid a combined federal, corporate, state and local tax rate of 23%, on average, which is lower than any other tax bracket. It is also a full percentage point lower than the 24.2% average tax rate paid by the bottom half of American households. [See chart below] There is some critique of the methodology used by Saez and Zucman, but the trend is clear—the extremely wealthy are paying a very low tax rate that compares with the rates paid by working families. [New York Times, Washington Post, Tax Policy Center]

- The average CEO in the 350 largest U.S. firms made 312 times as much income in 2017 as the average worker. In 1989, the ratio between average CEO and worker pay was 58 to 1; in 1965, it was only 20 to 1. In 2017 the average CEO received $18.9 million in compensation, well above the income threshold needed to be part of the richest 0.1%. [Economic Policy Institute (EPI)\(^\text{12}\)]

**WHO ARE THE RICHEST 1% IN AMERICA?**

- The richest 1\% owns 39\% of the nation’s wealth— the bottom 90\% owns just 23\% of the wealth. [Center for American Progress, Figure 2\(^\text{13}\)]

- The share of wealth held by the richest 1\% increased from about 30\% to around 40\% between 1989 and 2016. The wealth of the bottom 90\% decreased from 33\% to 23\% during the same period. [WCEG, Figure 2\(^\text{14}\)]

- $10 million was the minimum wealth of a household in the richest 1\% in 2016. [Washington Center for Equitable Growth (WCEG), Table 1\(^\text{15}\)]

- The richest 1\% take in about a fifth (22\%) of the nation’s income [Saez and Zucman\(^\text{16}\)]

- The average annual income of taxpayers in the richest 1\% is about $538,000 in 2019. [IRS data\(^\text{17}\)]

- Between 1993 and 2017, the real income of the richest 1\% grew by 95\%, whereas the real income growth of the bottom 99\% was just 16\%. The richest 1\% captured over half (51\%) of all income growth during that period. [Saez, Table 1\(^\text{18}\)]

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4 PolitiFact, “Bernie Sanders on target saying 3 richest have as much wealth as bottom half of all Americans” (July 3, 2019). [https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2019/jul/03/bernie-sanders/bernie-sanders-target-saying-3-richest-have-much-w/](https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2019/jul/03/bernie-sanders/bernie-sanders-target-saying-3-richest-have-much-w/)


6 Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Statistics of Income (SOI) Division data as of 2016, adjusted. (Oct. 2018). [https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/16in01etr.xls](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/16in01etr.xls) The AGI for the richest 0.1\% was $2,124,117 in 2016 (row 40). The authors assumed an increase of 3.5\% a year over three years based on the 15-year average, resulting in a figure of about $2.4 million in 2019. For number of taxpayers in 2016, see row 23.


10 WP, “For the first time in history, U.S. billionaires paid a lower tax rate than the working class last year” (Oct. 8, 2019).


13 Center for American Progress, “Ending Special Tax Treatment for the Very Wealthy” (June 4, 2019), Figure 2. https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/06/04/470621/ending-special-tax-treatment-wealthy/

14 Washington Center for Equitable Growth (WCEG), Figure 2.


17 IRS SOI Division data. The AGI for the richest 1% was $480,804 in 2016 (row 40). The authors assumed an annual increase of 3.8% a year over three years based on the 15-year average, resulting in a figure of nearly $537,725 in 2019.

18 Saez, “Striking it Richer,” Table 1, p. 8.