

Wealth by Numbers

America has long been known as the land of opportunity and the promise of a better life to people from all over the world. Recently, however, many Americans feel robbed of opportunities and better lives by the top 1% of their own. This growing income inequality has led to problems and civil unrest, as demonstrated by the “Occupy Wall Street” movement.

The table presents household income distribution data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Given that the poverty threshold for a two-member household is around \$14,000, it appears that approximately 13.7% of Americans are poor. At the other end of the income spectrum, 3.9% are rich, with household incomes higher than \$200,000.

Household Income Distribution in 2010

Under \$5,000	3.5%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	4.3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5.9%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	6.1%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	11.5%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	10.2%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	8.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	17.7%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	11.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	12.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4.5%
\$200,000 and over	3.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2011 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Poverty threshold also from the U.S. Census Bureau.

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