Tennessee

Income Inequality Grew in Tennessee Over the Past Two Decades

Tennessee’s Richest Families vs. Poorest Families

- The richest 20 percent of families have average incomes 8.1 times as large as the poorest 20 percent of families.
- This ratio was 6.5 in the late 1980s.
- This growth in income inequality is the 13th largest in the nation.
- The very richest families — top 5% — have average incomes 13.9 times as large as the poorest 20 percent of families.

Tennessee’s Richest Families vs. Families in the Middle

- The richest 20 percent of families have average incomes 2.6 times as large as the middle 20 percent of families.
- This ratio was 2.3 in the late 1980s.

Gains for Rich Families Outpaced Gains for Poor Families

Between the late 1980s and the mid-2000s:

- The average income of the poorest fifth of families did not change significantly.
- The average income of the middle fifth of families increased by $6,613, from $37,054 to $43,667. This is an increase of $389 per year.
- The average income of the richest fifth of families increased by $27,638, from $86,758 to $114,396. This is an increase of $1,626 per year.

Based on the latest available data (2004-2006)
Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Economic Policy Institute
Pulling Apart: A State By State Analysis of Income Trends
Available at: http://www.cbpp.org/4-9-08sfp.htm