

United States

Income Inequality Grew in the U.S. Over the Past Two Decades

Richest Families vs. Poorest Families

- The *richest* 20 percent of families have average incomes **7.3** times as large as the *poorest* 20 percent of families.
- This ratio was **6.0** in the late 1980s.
- The very richest families — top 5% — have average incomes 12.2 times as large as the poorest 20 percent of families.

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 **2.2** in the late 1980s.

A Closer Look: Short- and Long-term Trends

Late 1990s to mid-2000s

- The average income of the *poorest* fifth of families *decreased* by **\$459**, from \$18,575 to \$18,116.
- The average income of the *middle* fifth of families increased by **\$649**, from \$49,785 to \$50,434.
- The average income of the *richest* fifth of families increased by **\$11,044**, from \$121,087 to \$132,131.
- The average income of the *richest* 5% of families increased by **\$29,042**, from \$191,658 to \$220,700.

Late 1980s to mid-2000s

- The average income of the *poorest* fifth of families increased by **\$1,814**, from \$16,303 to \$18,116.
- The average income of the *middle* fifth of families increased by **\$5,784**, from \$44,650 to \$50,434.
- The average income of the *richest* fifth of families increased by **\$35,027**, from \$97,104 to \$132,131.
- The average income of the *richest* 5% of families increased by **\$82,607**, from \$138,191 to \$220,700.

