

INCOME INEQUALITY HAS INCREASED IN OKLAHOMA SINCE THE 1970s

Inequality has increased in Oklahoma over the past two decades. This can be observed by ranking all Oklahoma families according to their income level, dividing them into five groups (or fifths) of equal size, and calculating the average income of each fifth of families. This analysis shows by the late 1990s:

- The richest 20 percent of families had average incomes 9.8 times as large as the poorest 20 percent of families.
- The richest 20 percent of families had average incomes 3.0 times as large as the middle 20 percent of families.

The Long-Term Trend

Since the late 1970s, income inequality has increased in Oklahoma. The economic growth of the 1980s and 1990s was not shared evenly among the poor, the rich, and the middle class. Instead, the top fifth of families fared substantially better than other income groups.

In the late 1970s, the richest 20 percent of families had average incomes 7.7 times as large as the poorest 20 percent of families. By the late 1990s, that ratio had grown to 9.8.

- The average income of the poorest fifth of families decreased by \$20 between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, from \$12,990 to \$12,970.¹
- The average income of the middle fifth of families increased by \$3,550 between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, from \$39,180 to \$42,730.
- The average income of the richest fifth of families increased by \$26,940 between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, from \$100,420 to \$127,350.

The Recent Trend

Over the past decade, income inequality has remained about the same in Oklahoma.

- The average income of the poorest fifth of families increased by \$1,510 between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, from \$11,460 to \$12,970.
- The average income of the middle fifth of families increased by \$4,250 between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, from \$38,480 to \$42,730.
- The average income of the richest fifth of families increased by \$19,400 between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, from \$107,950 to \$127,350.

¹The direction of this change is not statistically significant at the 95 percent level of confidence.

Oklahoma

Income Inequality Among Families In Oklahoma Has Increased Since the 1970s

Income Gaps, Late 1990s

	Rank (1 is most unequal)
Richest fifth vs. poorest fifth	12
Richest fifth vs. middle fifth	7

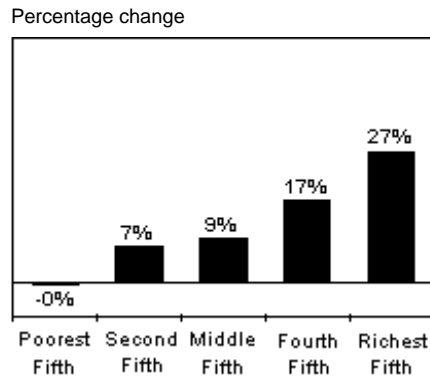
Income Gaps, Late 1990s

	Ratio
Richest fifth vs. poorest fifth	9.8
Richest fifth vs. middle fifth	3.0

Inflation-Adjusted Change in Incomes Late 1970s to Late 1990s

	Dollar Change	% Change	
Poorest Fifth . . .	-20	-0.2%	+
Middle Fifth	3,550 *	9.1%	+
Richest Fifth	26,940 *	26.8%	

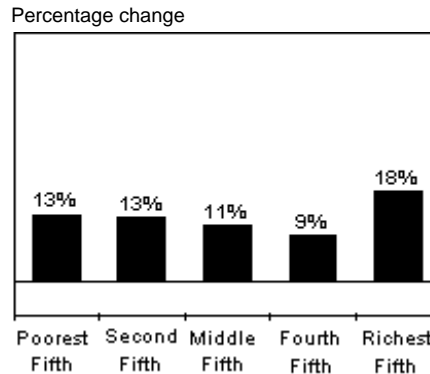
Income Changes for Oklahoma Families Late 1970s to Late 1990s, by Fifth of Families



Inflation-Adjusted Change in Incomes Late 1980s to Late 1990s

	Dollar Change	% Change
Poorest Fifth . . .	1,510 *	13.2%
Middle Fifth	4,250 *	11.0%
Richest Fifth	19,400 *	18.0%

Income Changes for Oklahoma Families Late 1980s to Late 1990s, by Fifth of Families



* Change is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

+ Difference between this change and the percent change in the income of the top fifth is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Source: Economic Policy Institute/Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends*, April 2002.