

INCOME INEQUALITY HAS INCREASED IN VERMONT SINCE THE 1970s

Inequality has increased in Vermont over the past two decades. This can be observed by ranking all Vermont 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 8.5 times as large as the poorest 20 percent of families.
- The richest 20 percent of families had average incomes 2.7 times as large as the middle 20 percent of families.

The Long-Term Trend

Since the late 1970s, income inequality has increased in Vermont. 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 6.4 times as large as the poorest 20 percent of families. By the late 1990s, that ratio had grown to 8.5.

- The average income of the poorest fifth of families increased by \$1,410 between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, from \$13,920 to \$15,330.
- The average income of the middle fifth of families increased by \$9,150 between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, from \$39,610 to \$48,760.
- The average income of the richest fifth of families increased by \$41,690 between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, from \$89,340 to \$131,030.

The Recent Trend

Over the past decade, income inequality has increased in Vermont.

In the late 1980s, the richest 20 percent of families had average incomes 7.4 times as large as the poorest 20 percent of families. By the late 1990s, that ratio had increased to 8.5.

- The average income of the poorest fifth of families decreased by \$1,100 between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, from \$16,430 to \$15,330.¹
- The average income of the middle fifth of families decreased by \$1,010 between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, from \$49,760 to \$48,760.
- The average income of the richest fifth of families increased by \$9,790 between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, from \$121,240 to \$131,030.¹

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

Vermont

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

Income Gaps, Late 1990s

| | Rank (1 is most unequal) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Richest fifth vs. poorest fifth | 33 |
| Richest fifth vs. middle fifth | 28 |

Income Gaps, Late 1990s

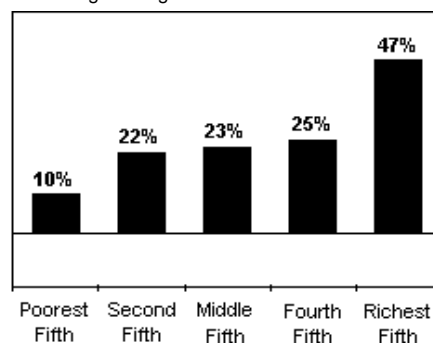
| | Ratio |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Richest fifth vs. poorest fifth | 8.5 |
| Richest fifth vs. middle fifth | 2.7 |

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

| | Dollar Change | % Change |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------|
| Poorest Fifth . . . | 1,410 * | 10.1% + |
| Middle Fifth | 9,150 * | 23.1% + |
| Richest Fifth | 41,690 * | 46.7% |

Income Change for Vermont Families Late 1970s to Late 1990s, by Fifth of Families

Percentage change

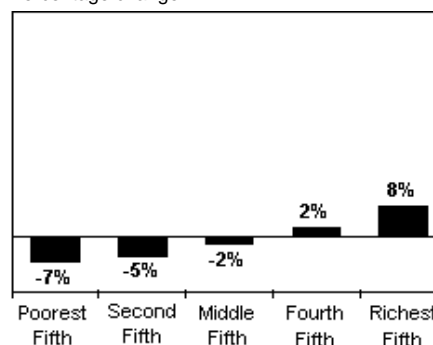


Inflation-Adjusted Change in Incomes Late 1980s to Late 1990s

| | Dollar Change | % Change |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------|
| Poorest Fifth . . . | -1,100 | -6.7% + |
| Middle Fifth | -1,010 * | -2.0% |
| Richest Fifth | 9,790 | 8.1% |

Income Change for Vermont Families Late 1980s to Late 1990s, by Fifth of Families

Percentage change



* 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.