

New IPS Report: Billionaire Bonanza

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New Research

Research & Commentary

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Wealthiest 20 people own more wealth than half the American population.

By Chuck Collins and Josh Hoxie

“Billionaire Bonanza,” a new report from the Institute for Policy Studies, exposes the extreme wealth concentrated within the fortunes of the 400 wealthiest Americans and compares this wealth to the much more meager assets of several different segments of American society.

The report proposes several solutions to close the growing gap between the ultra wealthy and the rest of the country. These policies include closing offshore tax havens and billionaire loopholes in the tax code that the wealthy exploit to hide their wealth.

The report also proposes a direct tax on wealth to break up the concentration of wealth and generate trillions of dollars in new revenue to invest in wealth building opportunities for working families.

KEY FINDINGS:

- America’s 20 wealthiest people — a group that could fit comfortably in one single Gulfstream G650 luxury jet – now own more wealth than the bottom half of the American population combined, a total of 152 million people in 57 million households.
- The Forbes 400 now own about as much wealth as the nation’s entire African-American population – plus more than a third of the Latino population – combined.
- The wealthiest 100 households now own about as much wealth as the entire African American population in the United States. Among the Forbes 400, just 2 individuals are African American -- Oprah Winfrey and Robert Smith.
- The wealthiest 186 members of the Forbes 400 own as much wealth as the entire Latino population. Just five members of the Forbes 400 are Latino including Jorge Perez, Arturo Moreno, and three members of the Santo Domingo family.
- With a combined worth of \$2.34 trillion, the Forbes 400 own more wealth than the bottom 61 percent of the country combined, a staggering 194 million people.
- The median American family has a net worth of \$81,000. The Forbes 400 own more wealth than 36 million of these typical American families. That’s as many households in the United States that own cats.

We believe that these statistics actually *underestimate* our current national levels of wealth concentration. The growing use of offshore tax havens and legal trusts has made the concealing of assets much more widespread than ever before.

Two types of policy interventions can reduce extreme wealth inequality in the United States.

First, we must close wealth escape routes. Wealthy individuals are moving quickly to shift wealth into offshore tax havens and bury it in private trusts, avoiding accountability and taxation every step of the way. This hidden wealth now totals in the trillions. Our first step must be to close these escape routes and tax dodges.

Second, we need to implement policies to reduce concentrated wealth. Without action to directly reduce private concentrations of wealth, inequality will continue to grow. By seriously taxing our wealthiest households, we could raise significant revenues and invest these funds to expand wealth-building opportunities across the economy.

Read the full report [here](#).

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