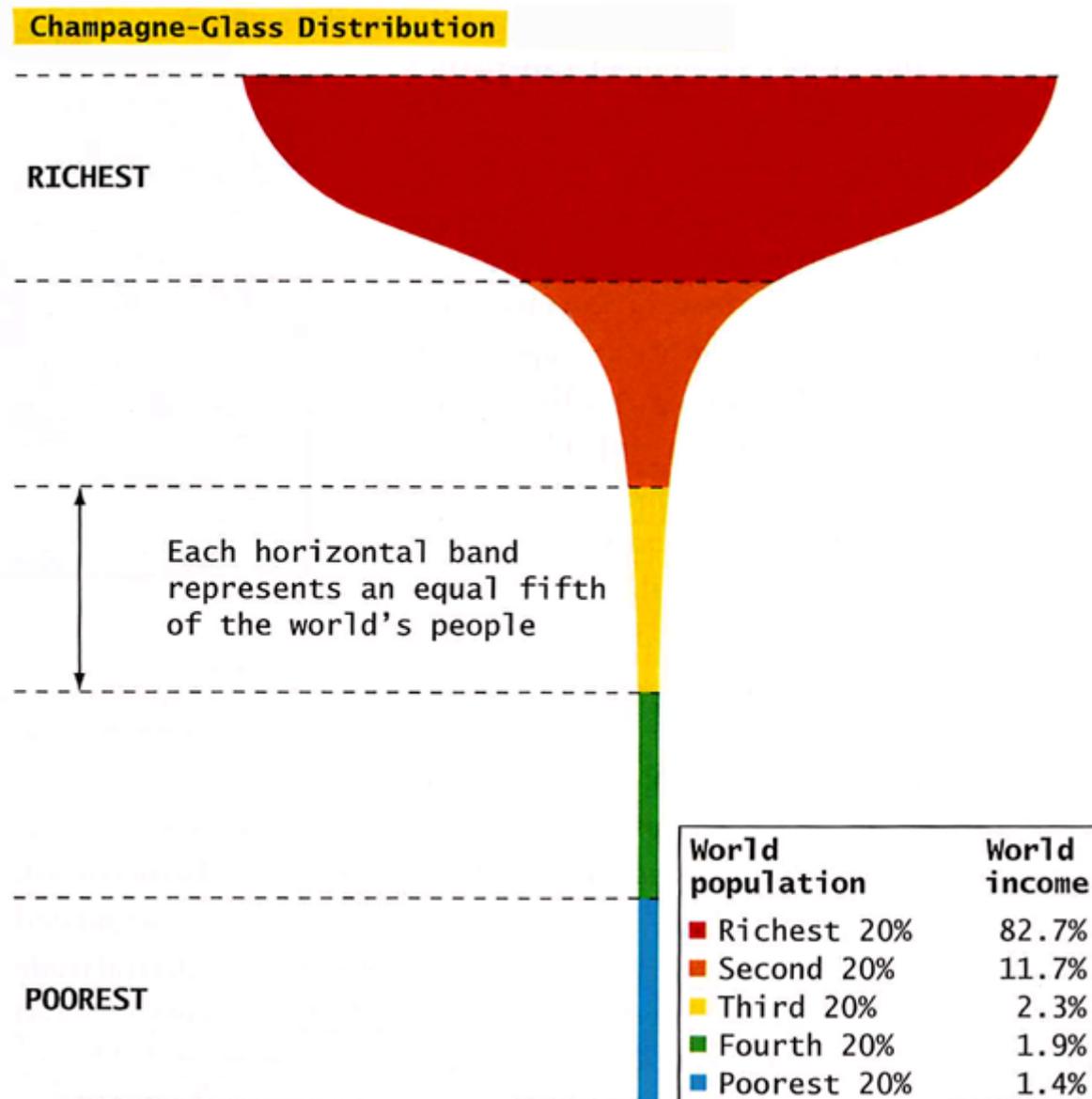


# Inequality: Facts & Statistics

Thanks to Irish Aid Funding, Bishops' Appeal has produced a leaflet full of information and guidelines entitled 'Global Poverty and the Church's Response'. Click here for the whole leaflet: [Bishops Appeal Irish Aid Leaflet on Global Poverty](#)

One section explores the vast chasms that global inequality breeds. Here are the statistics from the leaflet...and some more besides...



*"And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions."*

– *The Teachings of Jesus, Luke 12:15*

*"In the long run men inevitably become the victims of their wealth. They adapt their lives and habits to their money, not their money to their lives. It preoccupies their thoughts, creates artificial needs, and draws a curtain between them and the world."*

– [Herbert Croly](#), U.S. political philosopher (1869-1930)

- There are 27 million slaves in the world today – more than there was during the time of the slave trade. (These figures were true in 2010. However, in the past 5 years this number has escalated to 35 million, at the same time as the richest people in the world became exponentially richer – see the first graph below.)
- 4.5 days of current global military spending is the amount needed to provide basic education for every child on the planet.
- Today 2.1 billion people are forced to defecate in the open because of lack of toilets and 850 million people are dependent on surface stagnant water for drinking and cooking.
- The richest 1% own 80% of the world's resources.
- In industrialised countries, consumers throw away 286 million tonnes of cereal/grain products. That is the equivalent of 763 billion packets of pasta...and 842 million people are malnourished/half the world is hungry.
- The billions lost in tax dodging by corporations could fund entire national welfare systems, transform healthcare programmes and develop new industry.
- 250 million children in developing countries are forced to work, many in sweatshops.
- Studies show that doubling the salary of sweatshop workers would only increase the consumer cost of an item by 1.8%, while consumers would be willing to pay 15% more to know a product did not come from a sweatshop.

*"The disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition is the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments."*

– [Adam Smith](#), Scottish political economist (1723-1790)

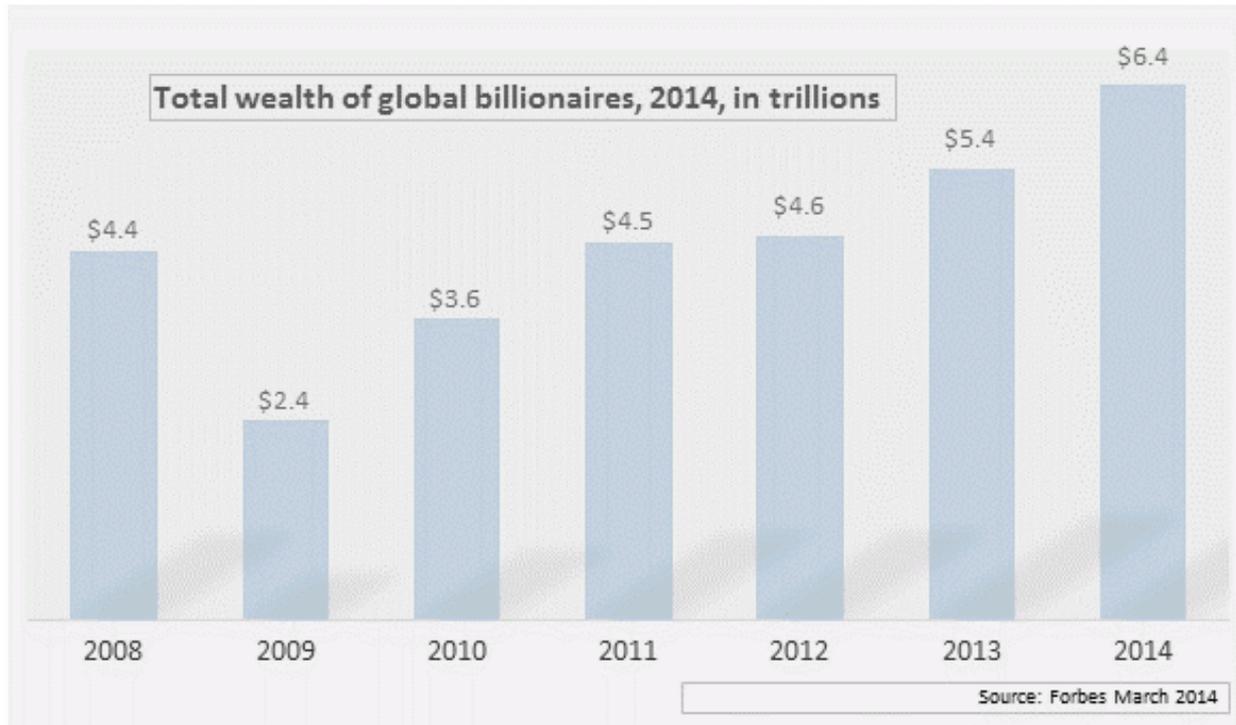
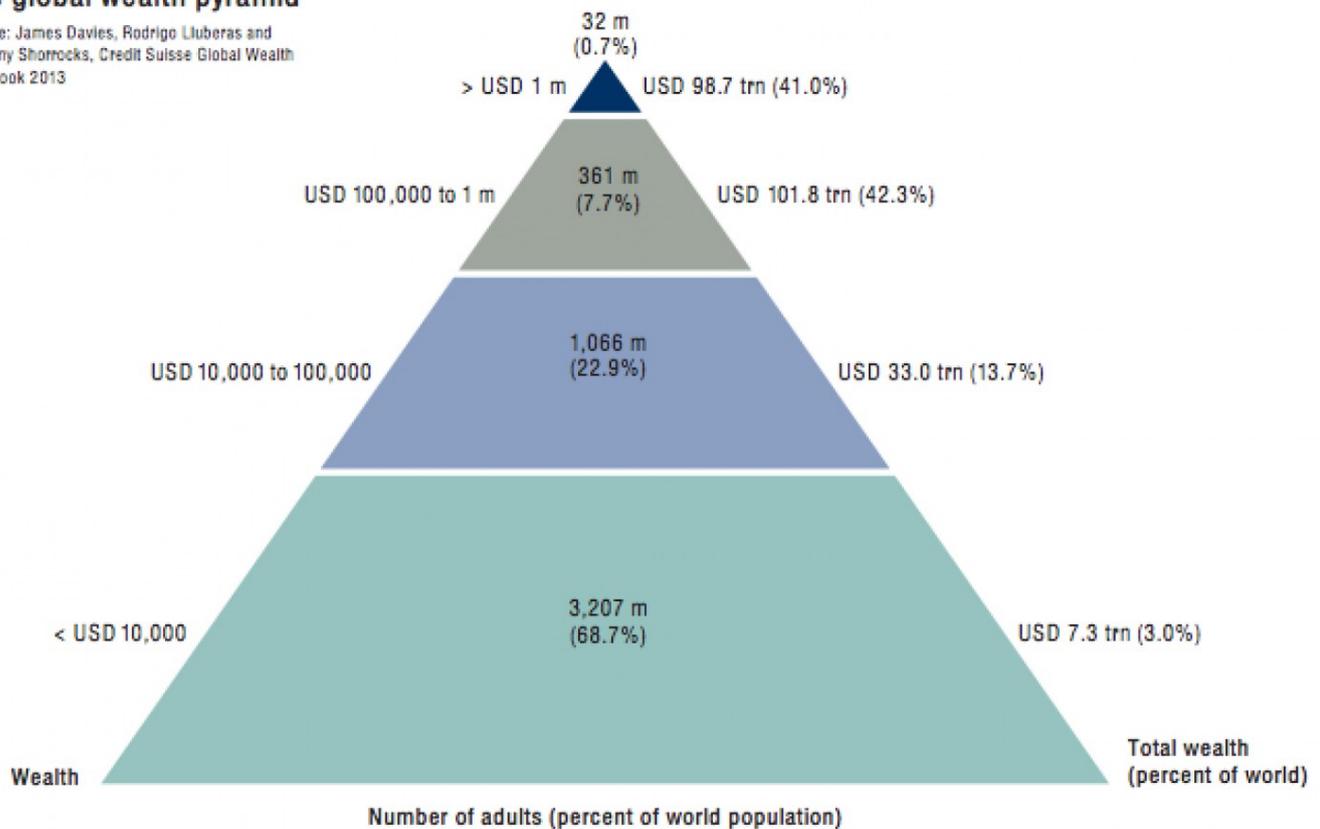


Figure 1

### The global wealth pyramid

Source: James Davies, Rodrigo Lluberas and Anthony Shorrocks, Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook 2013



“Our estimates suggest that the lower half of the global population possesses barely 1% of global wealth, while the richest 10% of adults own 86% of all wealth, and the top 1% account for 46% of the total.” Oxfam Report on Global Inequality, 2015

### **The super rich can view the lower classes as subhuman**

It is very hard to justify your huge wealth unless you see people beneath you as less deserving. Once the wealth gaps become very large, it is easier to get through the day if you see them as less able, less special. When earlier this month the civil society minister Brooks Newmark told people involved in charities that they should “stick to their knitting” rather than concern themselves with what might be causing the problems they were trying to remedy, he was exhibiting just such a “don’t worry your pretty little head” attitude.

At the extreme, the less fortunate may not be seen as people at all. That was the finding of a study from Princeton University in which MRI scans were taken of several university students’ active brains while they viewed images of different people. Researchers saw that photographs of homeless people and drug addicts failed to stimulate areas of the brain that usually activate whenever people think about other people, or themselves. Instead, the (mostly affluent) students reacted to the images as if they “had stumbled on a pile of trash”.

The more economic inequality there is in a country, the more people are prone to instantly size up each others’ status upon meeting. Some quickly cast their eyes down; others look over the shoulders of those they don’t think they need to respect. Social psychologists from Berkeley and Amsterdam have studied strangers in situations where one told the other of a difficult personal experience, such as a death in the family. The larger the social gap, the less compassion was shown. Such behaviour, and the acceptance of it as normal, becomes much more prevalent in those places where the 1% have taken the most.

-Excerpt taken from a Guardian article: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/sep/15/how-super-rich-got-richer-10-shocking-facts-inequality>