

Inequality in well-being increasing in the US: Study

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New research by School of Economics Associate Professor Shatakshee Dhongde combines multidimensional inequality measurements to better understand the disparity in the United States.

Her paper, published with co-authors Prasanta K. Pattanaik, a faculty member at the University of California Riverside, and Yongsheng Xu, a faculty member at Georgia State University, [appeared](#) in *The Review of Income and Wealth*.

In it, the researchers propose a new approach to measuring inequality in well-being. The paper uses U.S. Census data on three indicators of well-being—income, education, and health—to find that multidimensional inequality increased in the United States between 2010 and 2019. Two notable findings include:

1. The combination of education and income has become increasingly unequal.

In 2010, median education levels were relatively evenly distributed across incomes, with median education reported as "some college, but no degree" for all income brackets. However, by 2019, the top two income brackets saw an increase in median education to "bachelor's degree or higher," while the bottom two income brackets reported a decrease in median [education](#) levels to "[high school diploma](#)."

2. Multidimensional well-being has increased for everyone except the lowest earners.

Well-being measurements rose by more than 12% for the top three groups of earners between 2010 and 2019. Earners in the middle five groups also saw an increase in well-being, although less than the 12% that the top brackets enjoyed. In contrast, the bottom two [income](#) brackets experienced a decrease in well-being. Although their incomes rose slightly, a decline in [educational attainment](#) led to a lower well-being score overall.

In conclusion, the paper "highlights the importance of measuring

multidimensional well-being" for "a comprehensive picture of changes in the [quality of life](#) in a society over time," Dhongde and her co-authors write.

More information: Shatakshee Dhongde et al, Inequality in multidimensional well-being in the United States, *Review of Income and Wealth* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/roiw.12665](https://doi.org/10.1111/roiw.12665)

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