

## AP Economics Essay: Inequality in the United States 2021-2022

Due: 10 December 21

The topic of inequality is becoming more and more prevalent. Given that 3 men now have more wealth in the United States than the bottom 50%, it might be easy to believe that inequality is a major problem. Some inequality is considered good to promote incentives to work and produce goods and services. Is inequality in the United States and the world a problem? Is it a big problem, a small problem, or is this just a common complaint of the lazy and uneducated? Is this a problem of perceived inequality, or real inequality? Is gender, race, or other factors more likely to be an issue in inequality? Is inequality a problem when most people have access to goods and services such as health care, the internet, public education, food banks, and other services? Are the levels of inequality today different than levels of inequality in the past, and how did those situations shape their times? Is inequality harming our economy, our politics, our society, or all of these? Is inequality growing or shrinking? Are we at the mercy of markets, or their master?

**Essay Topic:** Examine the current levels of inequality in the United States, and determine if the current levels of inequality are a problem, and why or why not.

1. Essay opening
  - a. Introduction
  - b. Thesis (underline)
2. Main Body
  - a. What is inequality?
    - i. Inequality of income versus inequality of wealth
    - ii. Inequality of opportunity versus inequality of outcome
  - b. Historical inequality
    - i. Great Depression
    - ii. Great Prosperity (Post WWII to 1970s)
    - iii. Recession of 2007-
  - c. Measurements of inequality
    - i. Information about
      1. Wealth
        - a. General statistics
        - b. Inheritance
      2. Income
        - a. General Statistics
        - b. Are jobs fair?
        - c. Are wages fair?
        - d. Who gets the best jobs?
      3. Social status
        - a. Homeless versus penthouse
        - b. Minority versus WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant)
        - c. Single Mother
        - d. LGBTQ
      4. Opportunities
    - ii. Is inequality real or perceived?
      1. Does it matter?
  - d. Inequality and society
    - i. Living with inequality

1. Harm or incentive?
  2. Inequality and discrimination
  3. Stratification of society
  4. Crime and inequality
  5. Race, gender, religion
  6. Marital status
  7. Location, location, location
    - a. City versus rural versus suburb
    - b. Central park New York City or Queens?
  - ii. Inequality and politics
    1. Consequences
    2. Democracy or Plutocracy? (Or Kleptocracy?)
    3. Democracy versus Capitalism (one person one vote, or \$1 one vote?)
  - e. Who is responsible?
    - i. Individuals
      1. Are we lazy?
      2. Is Horatio Alger a myth or inspiration?
      3. Can we pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, or do we lack bootstraps?
    - ii. Society
      1. Education (or lack thereof?)
      2. Media, telling the truth, making mountains out of molehills, or are they minimizing the real effects of inequality?
      3. Do public benefits reduce incentive, or give us a foundation?
    - iii. Bad Actors
      1. Banks
      2. Corporations
      3. Government
      4. Other?
3. Conclusion
- a. Bring it all together and restate thesis

1. Make sure to include citations *every time you use a statement or an idea from the readings that I have provided, or that you found in your own independent research*. Use **APA citation notation** (found on website). Using others work without providing proper citation is plagiarism and grounds for immediate failure on this essay.

2. Papers should be 10-12 pages in length and approximately 3000-3600 words, in Times New Roman or Ariel 12 point font, double spaced, pages numbered, cover page optional, references on last page (as per APA notation), 1 inch borders on top/bottom and left/right, stapled (no covers or binders). Be sure to include name and period.

3. Underline your Thesis.

4. Please type all work on a computer.