An Overview of Democracy’s Contemporary Dysfunctions

DAVID PERITZ
A Continuum of Democratic Dysfunction | Dying | Damaged | Disfigured | Diminished

Figure 1: Spectrum of Forms of Dysfunctional Democracy and Direction and Extent of Decline over Last c. 40 years
Political Responsiveness Limited to the Very Wealthy
“The Most Terrifying Diagram” on American Politics

(From Benjamin Page and Martin Gilens, Democracy in America?)
Mounk’s Account of Trends Away From Liberal Democracy

(Yascha Mounk, *The People Against Democracy*, pp. 36 & 59)
Declining Interest in Politics for Younger Americans

US respondents who express interest in politics, by decade of birth.

(Yascha Mounk, *The People Against Democracy*, p. 100)
Declining Value of Living in a Democracy In US

(Yascha Mounk, The People Against Democracy, p. 105)
Declining Value of Living in a Democracy throughout Democratic World

(Yascha Mounk, *The People Against Democracy*, p. 106)
Support for Army Rule in the United States

Year of survey

Share of US respondents who think that “having the army rule” is a “good” or “very good” political system, by age group, 1995–2011.

(Yascha Mounk, *The People Against Democracy*, p. 110)
Support for a Strongman Leader around the World

(Yascha Mounk, *The People Against Democracy*, p. 112)
Percent change, per year, in millennials who position themselves on the far left or the far right of the political spectrum.

(Yascha Mounk, *The People Against Democracy*, p. 121)
Overall, spending on federal elections & lobbying has soared.
In 2010, 99.74% of the people in the US gave less than $200 each. 0.26% of the people funded 68% of contributions to Congress:

Data: OpenSecrets.org
How often does the higher-spending candidate win?

Source: Center for Responsive Politics
An Overview of the Return of Income Inequality after the Great Compression
Income Inequality in the U.S. Rose Rapidly in the last 30-40 Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Segment</th>
<th>2013 Mean Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 5%</td>
<td>$322,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Quintile</td>
<td>$185,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Quintile</td>
<td>$83,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Quintile</td>
<td>$52,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Quintile</td>
<td>$30,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom Quintile</td>
<td>$11,651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Bureau Data from 1967-2013
Decoupling of Economic Growth and Wages for Most Americans

Shaded areas indicate US recessions - 2014 research.stlouisfed.org
Figure 7: The broken social contract, US, 1947–present

The Results: The Increasing Top-skewed Benefits of Growth...
Especially for the Top 10%...
And Even More so for the Top 1%

Most Income Gains in Recent Expansions Went to Top 1 Percent

Percentage share of income gains during economic expansions accruing the top 1 percent and bottom 99 percent of earners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Top 1%</th>
<th>Bottom 99%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949 to 1953</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'54 to '57</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'58 to '60</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'61 to '69</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'70 to '73</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'75 to '79</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'82 to '90</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'91 to '00</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'01 to '07</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'09 to '12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pavlina R. Tcherneva calculations based on data from Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez and N.B.E.R.
Increasingly Steep Income Gradient

- **Lowest**
- **Second**
- **Third**
- **Fourth**
- **5 Percent**


Income Levels: 0, 50000, 100000, 150000, 200000, 250000, 200000

In 1967, the income was low across all categories.

During the decades, there was a clear trend of increasing income disparity, with the 5 Percent category showing the steepest increase.
The U.S. is also an Increasingly Immobile Society