

Inequality In America Is Worse Than In Egypt, Tunisia Or Yemen

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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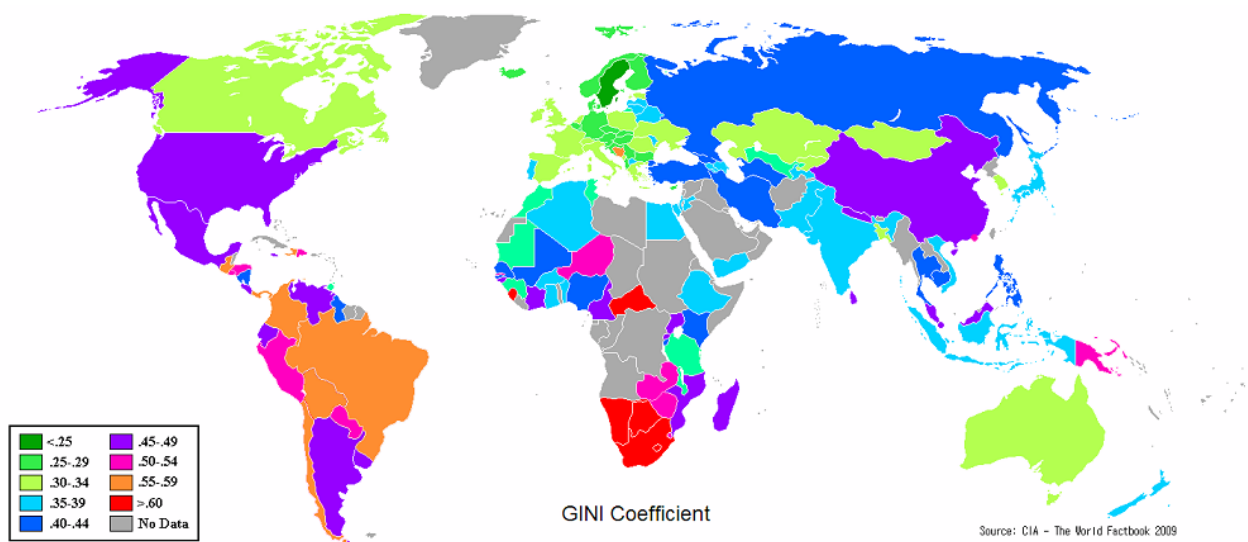
Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

[Egyptian](#), [Tunisian](#) and [Yemeni](#) protesters all say that inequality is one of the main reasons they're protesting.

However, the U.S. actually has much greater inequality than in any of those countries.

Specifically, the "Gini Coefficient" - the figure economists use to measure inequality - is higher in the U.S.



Gini Coefficients are like golf - the lower the score, the better (i.e. the more equality).

According to the [CIA World Fact Book](#), the U.S. is ranked as the 42nd most unequal country in the world, with a Gini Coefficient of 45.

In contrast:

- Tunisia is ranked the 62nd most unequal country, with a Gini Coefficient of 40.
- Yemen is ranked 76th most unequal, with a Gini Coefficient of 37.7.
- And Egypt is ranked as the 90th most unequal country, with a Gini Coefficient of around 34.4.

And inequality in the U.S. has [soared](#) in the last couple of years, since the Gini Coefficient

was last calculated, so it is undoubtedly currently much higher.

So why are Egyptians rioting, while the Americans are complacent?

Well, Americans - until recently - have been some of the wealthiest people in the world, with most having plenty of comforts (and/or entertainment) and more than enough to eat.

But another reason is that - as Dan Ariely of Duke University and Michael I. Norton of Harvard Business School [demonstrate](#) - Americans consistently underestimate the amount of inequality in our nation.

As William Alden [wrote](#) last September:

Americans vastly underestimate the degree of wealth inequality in America, and we believe that the distribution should be far more equitable than it actually is, according to a new study.

Or, as the study's authors put it: "All demographic groups — even those not usually associated with wealth redistribution such as Republicans and the wealthy — desired a more equal distribution of wealth than the status quo."

The report ... "Building a Better America — One Wealth Quintile At A Time" by Dan Ariely of Duke University and Michael I. Norton of Harvard Business School ... shows that across ideological, economic and gender groups, Americans thought the richest 20 percent of our society controlled about 59 percent of the wealth, while the real number is closer to 84 percent.

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