

Module 7: Developing the personal maths skills of teachers and assessors

Developmental task

Handling data

Academic Context

Are the rich getting richer?

It is often asserted that the gap between rich and poor in society is increasing. Your task is to investigate this claim.

You have been provided with two sets of data:

- Data from an OECD report showing how earnings changed in the world's richest countries between 1985 and 2008. This report based its measurements on the [Gini coefficient](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gini_coefficient) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gini_coefficient) where countries are ranked between a figure of zero, where everyone earns the same, to 1, where the richest person has all the income.
- Data taken from the World's Top Incomes database, showing how incomes of the richest sectors of society have grown year-on-year in selected nations since the early 20th century.

Analyse the data, and produce a brief report to answer the following questions:

1. How has the distribution of incomes in the UK changed over the years? How accurate is it to say that inequality in the UK is increasing?
2. How does the distribution of income in the UK compare to other countries? Can it be said to be a worldwide phenomenon?

Explain your conclusions clearly, backed up by statistical analysis and appropriate statistical terminology.

Data accessed from Guardian newspaper datablog and reproduced with kind permission © Guardian News & Media Ltd:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/may/16/top-income-earners>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/dec/05/oecd-inequality-report-uk-us>

(Original source: OECD:

<http://www.oecd.org/newsroom/societygovernmentsmustacklerecordgapbetweenrichandpoorsaysoecd.htm>)