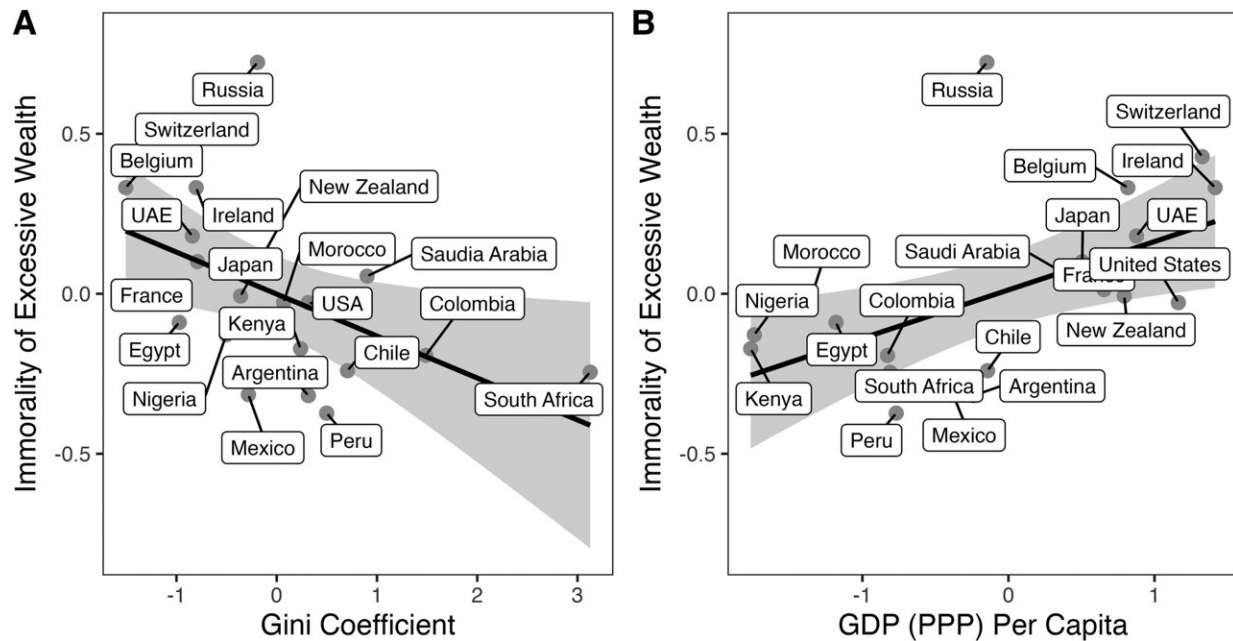


Global survey investigates views on excessive wealth and morality

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The relationship between the A) Gini coefficient and B) log GDP (PPP) per capita with the immorality of excessive wealth. Note: (A) Gini coefficient was standardized where higher numbers represent more inequality and lower numbers represent more equal societies. (B) GDP was log-transformed and then standardized, where higher numbers represent more economic development and lower numbers represent a smaller economy. Credit: *PNAS Nexus* (2025). DOI: 10.1093/pnasnexus/pgaf158

Is excessive wealth immoral? Most people do not think so, but members

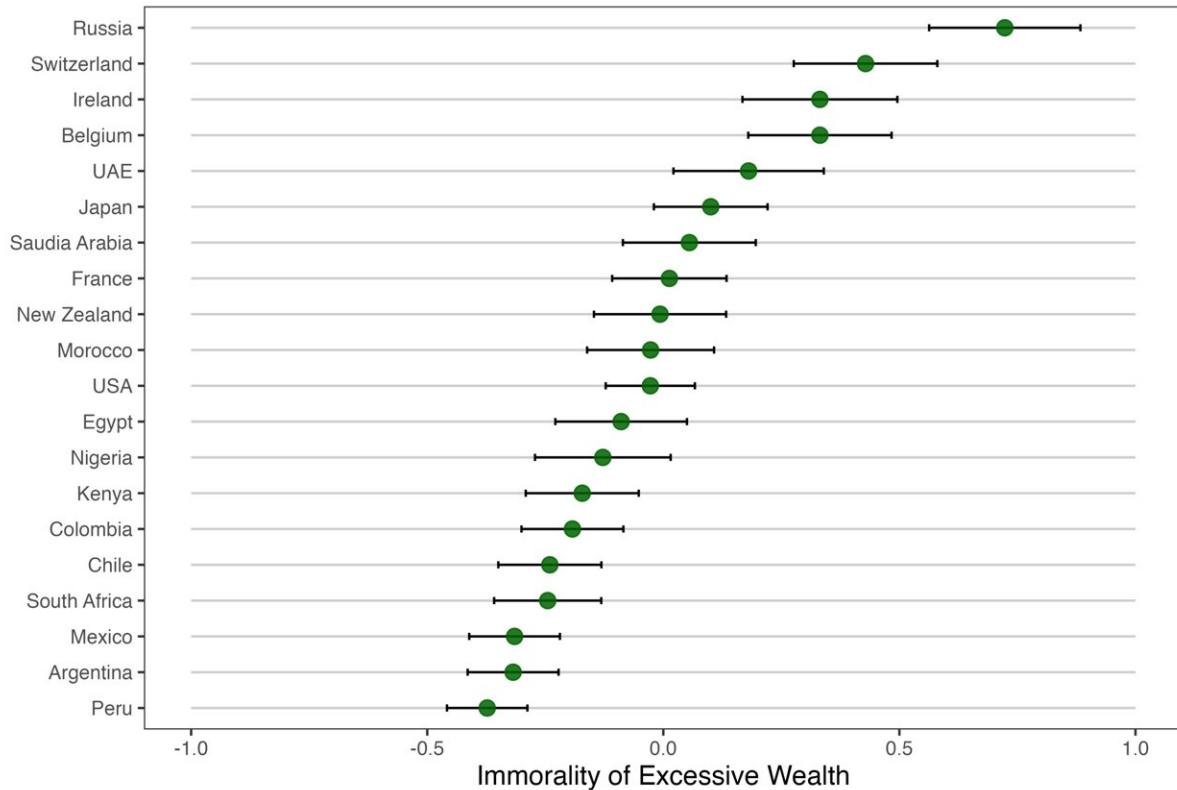
of societies that are more equal and wealthy than average are more likely to believe it is wrong to have too much money.

Currently, the world's eight richest individuals have as much wealth as the bottom 50% of people worldwide. There are two distinct moral objections to such extreme wealth. One is that [economic inequality](#) is wrong, an opinion shared by a majority of people worldwide. The other is that extreme wealth itself is wrong.

[Published](#) in *PNAS Nexus*, Jackson Trager and Mohammad Atari recruited survey samples mirroring demographics in terms of gender, education, and age for 20 nations, totaling 4,351 participants overall.

Participants were asked "Is it morally wrong to have too much money?" "Too rich" was left unquantified, given broad individual and cultural variations in how much money is considered excessive. People in Russia, Switzerland, and Ireland had the strongest moral objections to excessive wealth, and people in Peru, Argentina, and Mexico had the least objections to excessive wealth.

Globally, the average response was somewhere between "not wrong at all" and "moderately wrong." Nations with high GDP were more morally opposed to excessive wealth than nations with low GDP, possibly reflecting the greater visibility of harms caused by excessive wealth in wealthier nations. Nations characterized by equality were also more morally opposed to excessive wealth than nations with high levels of inequality.



The perceived immorality of too much wealth in 20 nations. Scores are standardized and whiskers represent the 95% confidence interval. Credit: Jackson Trager and Mohammad Atari

Individual respondents who valued authority and people being rewarded for their work and skill were less likely to condemn excessive wealth, as were those on the political right. Survey results also revealed an association between moral condemnation of excessive wealth and values related to equality and purity, as well as younger age.

According to the authors, the link between purity and condemnation of riches may be related to concerns that large amounts of money and the endless avenues for self-indulgence that money affords are apt to corrupt individuals, reducing their spiritual cleanliness. Extreme [wealth](#), to some,

is disgusting.

More information: Jackson Trager et al, The immorality of too much money, *PNAS Nexus* (2025). DOI: [10.1093/pnasnexus/pgaf158](https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgaf158).
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Provided by PNAS Nexus

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