

Taxes: What's Fair?

The average American family pays just over 30% of its income in taxes, knows that's what it pays, and thinks the rate is too high...

	About what percentage of your total income do you think you pay every year, when you add all these taxes together?..	What's the highest amount, the highest percentage, of your income that you think would be fair to pay in all these taxes combined?...	
	Median	Median	Mean
Everyone	30%	19%	19%
By Income			
Less than \$30,000	25%	15%	15%
\$30,000-\$49,000	30%	20%	20%
\$50,000-\$75,000	35%	20%	21%
\$75,000 or more	35%	20%	22%
By Gender			
Male	30%	20%	20%
Female	30%	15%	18%
By Race			
White	30%	20%	19%
Black	30%	12%	15%
By Age			
35 yrs. old or younger	30%	20%	19%
36-49 yrs. old	33%	20%	19%
50-64 years old	30%	20%	19%
65 yrs. old or more	25%	15%	18%
By Party ID			
Republican	30%	20%	19%
Democrat	30%	18%	19%
Independent	30%	20%	19%

•Each question was prefaced with the following: "Now, I'd like to ask you some general questions about the amount of taxes people pay each year, and what would be fair. By taxes I mean not just federal income taxes, but all the taxes you pay to the federal, state, and local governments, including Social Security taxes, state income and sales taxes, and local property taxes...."

...A family earning \$200,000 a year pays on average 39% of its income in taxes. Most Americans think it pays less. Most would tax it at a rate much lower than it actually pays.

What about a family that makes, say \$200,000 a year. How much, what percentage, do you think this family actually pays in all their taxes?...	What's the highest percentage you think would be fair for a family making \$200,000 a year to pay when you add all their taxes together?...		Now, how about a family of 4 that makes, say \$50,000 a year. What percentage of their income, do you think this family actually pays in all their taxes combined?...	What's the highest percentage you think would be fair for a family making \$50,000 to pay when you add all their taxes together?...
Median	Median	Mean	Median	Median
25%	25%	27%	25%	17%
25%	25%	26%	23%	15%
25%	25%	28%	30%	20%
28%	25%	27%	25%	20%
30%	25%	26%	25%	17%
25%	25%	27%	25%	18%
25%	25%	27%	25%	15%
29%	25%	27%	25%	17%
25%	25%	29%	25%	17%
25%	25%	27%	25%	17%
25%	25%	26%	25%	16%
28%	25%	27%	25%	18%
25%	25%	27%	20%	17%
30%	25%	25%	25%	15%
25%	25%	29%	25%	20%
25%	25%	27%	25%	17%

Source: Survey by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research for the *Reader's Digest*, October 20-29, 1995.