



Taxing Wealth for a Fairer and Greener Scotland

STUC Wealth Analysis – October 2025

This report has been written by the STUC for Tax Justice Scotland, a campaign backed by a diverse range of civil society organisations, think tanks, trade unions, economists and academics.¹ It is calling for a fairer tax system in Scotland, across the UK, and globally that delivers for people, public services, and the planet.

This STUC analysis is based on the Sunday Times Rich List and the ONS Wealth and Assets Survey, as well as labour market and tax data. While the basis for the calculations is outlined later in this report, the analysis shows:

- Scotland's two richest families (£14.1 billion) are wealthier than almost a quarter (24%) of the population with the least wealth combined (£13.5 billion).
- The combined wealth of Scotland's five richest families (£19.3 billion) is more than the total Scottish income tax revenue for the 2024-25 financial year (£18.99 billion).
- Between 2024 and 2025, the combined wealth of Scotland's ten richest families grew at a faster rate (7.9%) than average earnings (5.9%) and total earnings (5.5%) in Scotland.
- While existing wealth taxes should be strengthened, for illustrative purposes, if a new annual wealth tax of 2% was applied to all those with assets worth more than £10m, it could raise up to an estimated £492 million extra per year from Scotland's 10 richest families alone.
- To illustrate the potential impact of these extra tax revenues, we estimate they could fund: more than 11,600 newly qualified teachers, more than 12,900 newly qualified nurses, more than 13,500 new firefighters, more than 15,000 new civil servants, or more than 17,000 home care workers. Alternatively, they could fund an estimated 1,000 electric double decker buses from Alexander Dennis, free bus travel across Scotland, a payment of £1,000 to every home in Scotland in extreme fuel poverty, or doubling the Scottish Child Payment to lift more than 30,000 children out of poverty.
- Momentum is building for a UK wide wealth tax, with leading economists and 75% of the UK public supporting a wealth tax. Existing estimates suggest a series of tax reforms targeting wealth at UK level, including a 2% tax on assets over £10 million, could raise up to £60 billion per year.
- While a UK-wide wealth tax is likely to be preferable, the Scottish Government has the power to introduce a tax on wealth, provided this is implemented as part of the local tax system rather than a national tax. The Scottish Government should therefore engage with the UK Government to look at how it could implement a wealth tax in Scotland.
- The Scottish Government can also act to better tax property wealth by scrapping the regressive and outdated council tax and replace it with a proportional property tax. In 2020-22 property wealth in Scotland was estimated at £322.6 billion, up by almost £100 billion in just ten years, and now accounting for 30% of Scotland's total wealth.

Scotland's increasingly unequal distribution of wealth

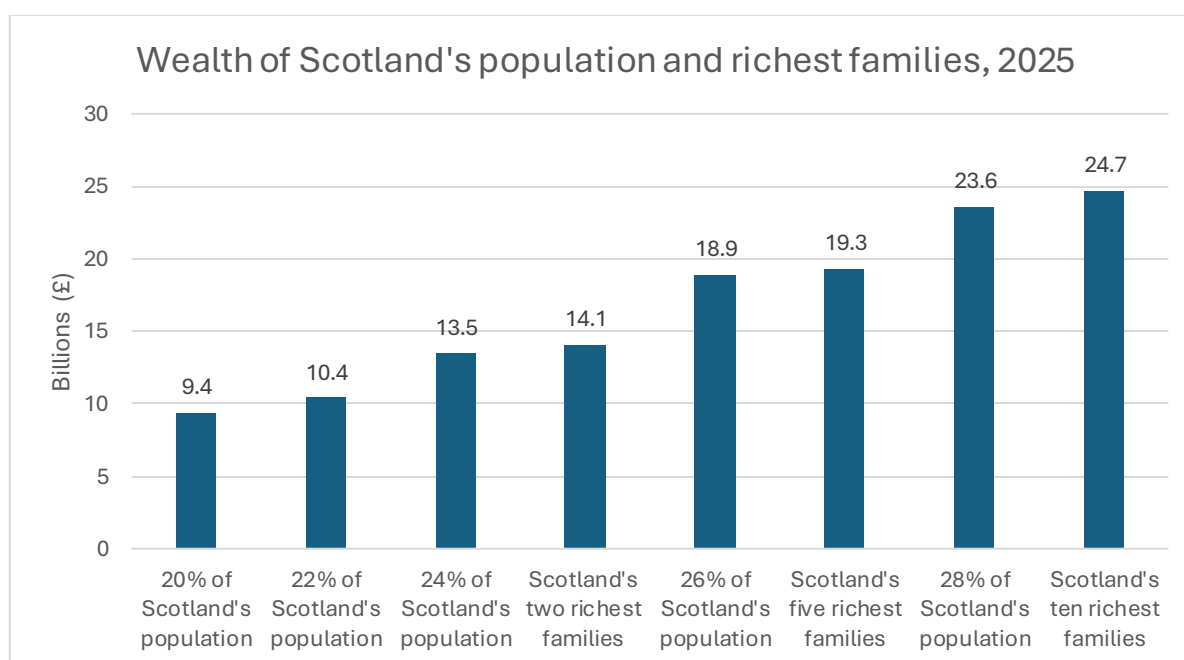
ONS data shows the wealthiest 2% of households in Scotland have more wealth than the poorest 50% combined², but analysis of data for the very wealthiest people reveals that the level of inequality is even more extreme.

Scotland's two richest families (£14.1 billion combined) are wealthier, according to the Sunday Times Rich List for 2025,³ than almost a quarter (24%) of Scotland's population with the least wealth combined (£13.5 billion).⁴ To put this another way, 2 families have more wealth than 1.3 million people.

Meanwhile:

- Scotland's 5 richest families (£19.3 billion) on the List are wealthier than 26% of Scotland's population with the least wealth combined (£18.9 billion).
- Scotland's 10 richest families (£24.7 billion) on the List are wealthier than 28% of Scotland's population with the least wealth put together (£24.5 billion).

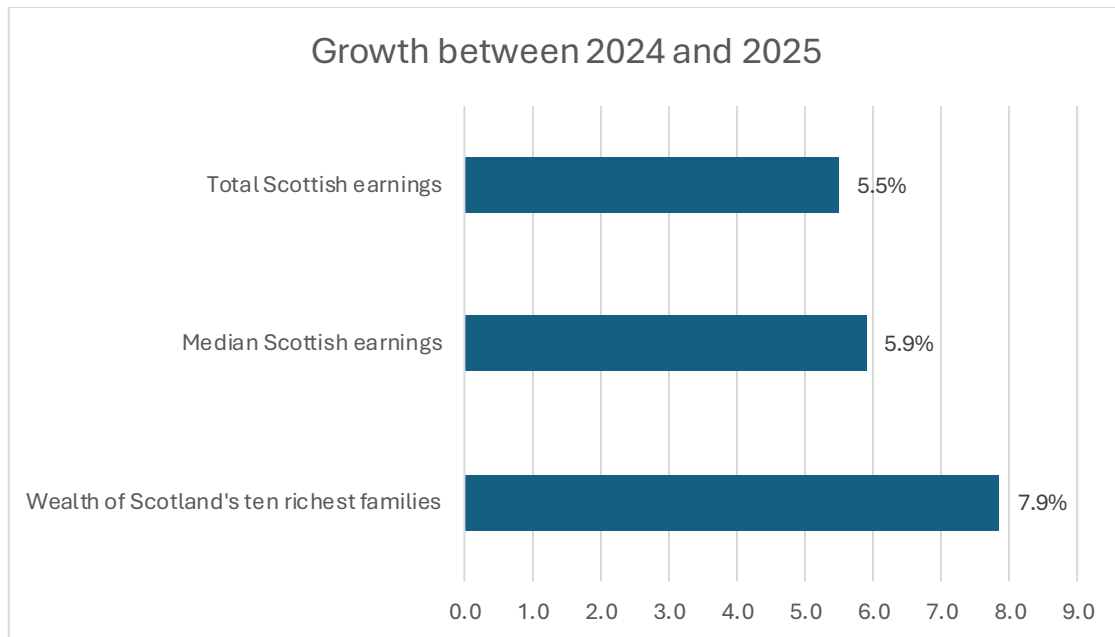
These comparisons are illustrated below:



STUC analysis based on Sunday Times Rich List 2025 and ONS Wealth and Assets Survey 2020-22, with prices adjusted to 2025 using Bank of England Inflation Calculator

Growth in the wealth of the richest is outstripping pay

Not only are the overall stocks of wealth extremely unequal, but between 2024 and 2025, the combined wealth of Scotland's ten richest families grew at a faster rate (7.9%) than total Scottish PAYE earnings (5.5%), and average Scottish PAYE earnings (5.9%). These comparisons are illustrated below:

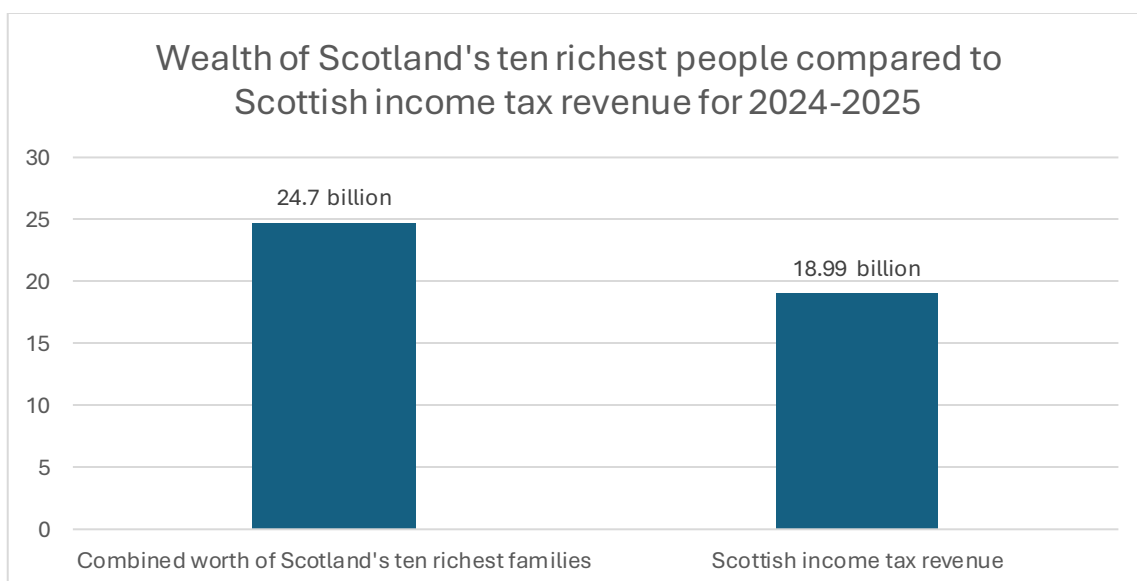


STUC analysis based on Sunday Times Rich List and HMRC PAYE real time information⁵

The need to better tax wealth, not just income

Total stocks of wealth in the UK have grown faster than the wider economy, creating a much more imbalanced distribution. In 1985, total UK household wealth amounted to 280% of GDP – the measure commonly used to value the UK’s entire economy – but by 2020-22, this had risen to 610%.⁶

We can see the impact of this dynamic at a Scottish level. For example, in the 2024-25 financial year, the combined wealth of Scotland’s ten richest families (£24.7 billion) was more than total Scottish income tax revenue forecast to be raised in 2024-25 (£18.99 billion).⁷



STUC analysis based on Sunday Times Rich List and Scottish Fiscal Commission forecasts

How much could better taxing wealth raise?

Analysis for Tax Justice UK and Patriotic Millionaires UK has already estimated that a series of tax reforms targeting wealth at UK level could raise up to £60 billion per year.⁸ This includes reforms to existing taxes on wealth, like increasing Capital Gains Tax and applying National Insurance to investment income, and a new 2% wealth tax on assets over £10 million, which is estimated to raise up to £24 billion a year across the UK.

Calls for a wealth tax of this type are growing. Leading economists,⁹ and 75% of the UK public support a wealth tax.¹⁰ Given the knock-on consequences for the Scottish Budget, and warnings from the Scottish Fiscal Commission on major short-falls in it,¹¹ all parties in Scotland should actively champion action by the UK Government to better tax wealth.

However, action can be taken to better tax wealth in Scotland too. While a UK-level wealth tax is likely to be most effective, the Scottish Government has the power to introduce a tax on wealth in Scotland, provided this is implemented as part of the local tax system rather than a national tax. Implementing a wealth tax in Scotland would not be simple, given it would require HMRC support to set up a new system to assess and tax wealth.

Positively, the Scottish Government says it is exploring opportunities for reforms to better tax wealth. It says it will publish a literature review of wealth taxation and undertake 'extensive engagement' on how this learning could be applied in a Scottish context, "in the next parliamentary term and beyond".¹² However, if the Scottish Government is serious about making Scotland a fairer society, it should accelerate this process and, at the very least, immediately ask the UK Government to engage with it to consider implementing a wealth tax in Scotland.

While it would apply to all those with assets of more than £10m, to illustrate the impact that an annual wealth tax of 2% could have, we have applied it to the wealth held by Scotland's ten richest families alone. We estimate this could raise up to £492 million in a single year.

This is calculated by:

- Identifying the individual wealth of the 10 richest families in Scotland using the Sunday Times Rich List. Each of these families have more than £10 million, which means they would be liable to pay the new wealth tax.
- We then deducted £10m from each family's wealth to take account of the proposed threshold for the new wealth tax.
- We then applied a 2% tax to the remaining wealth held by each family and added the resultant figures together up to provide a total for the 10 richest families.
- Note: the total should be considered an estimate as the Sunday Times Rich List is based upon publicly available information.
- While this is a static calculation and doesn't account for potential behavioural responses from the 10 families, it should also be recognised that a wealth tax of 2% on assets of more than £10 million would cover many more people than the ten richest families. It is therefore likely to raise considerably more than £492 million.

What could a wealth tax fund?

To give a sense of the types of impact this additional tax revenue could have, we calculate that it could fund one of the below (or a combination of them at a lower level:):

- More than 11,600 newly qualified teachers.¹³
- More than 12,900 newly qualified nurses.¹⁴
- More than 13,500 new firefighters.¹⁵
- More than 15,000 new civil servants.¹⁶
- More than 17,000 home care workers.¹⁷
- 1,000 electric double decker buses from Alexander Dennis
- Free bus travel across Scotland.¹⁸
- A payment of £1,000 to every home in Scotland in extreme fuel poverty.¹⁹
- Doubling the Scottish Child Payment to £55 to lift more than 30,000 children out of poverty.²⁰

Given the above calculations, a wealth tax would largely negate the need for the Scottish Government's proposed cuts to the Scottish public sector workforce of 12,000 workers over the next five years, as contained within the Scottish Government's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan.²¹

Investing in public services as outlined above can also work to tackle inequalities. While public services benefit everyone, they are particularly important for those on low-incomes, disabled people and women. Conversely, men are more likely to hold wealth than women (the majority of people identified in the Sunday Times Rich List are men) so the current under taxation of wealth is predominantly a tax break for wealthy men.

The need for a proportional property tax

As part of near-term efforts to better tax wealth, the Scottish Parliament has substantial powers over local taxation which should be used to improve taxation of property wealth. In 2020-22, property wealth in Scotland was estimated at £322.6 billion, up by almost £100 billion in just ten years (from £224.7 billion in 2010-2012), and accounting for 30% of Scotland's total wealth (£1,04 billion in 2020-2022).²²

At the same time as property wealth is increasing, councils are facing ever-increasing funding gaps.²³ Council Tax reform is long overdue. A poorly designed tax from the outset, its flaws have only deepened as time has gone on.

The next Scottish Parliament and Government should quickly deliver a revaluation of all domestic properties, which remain based on property values from 1991, while designing a new system of frequent, ongoing property revaluations as part of a Reformed Property Tax. This new system should be fully in place by 2031 at the latest. Tax Justice Scotland's [recent briefing paper](#) sets this out in more detail.²⁴

For further information contact:

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- ¹ Tax Justice Scotland: <https://taxjustice.scot/>
- ² Scottish Government (14 August 2025), *Wealth in Scotland 2006-2022*: https://data.gov.scot/wealth/#Wealth_inequality
- ³ Sunday Times Rich List (2025) <https://www.thetimes.com/sunday-times-rich-list>
- ⁴ Analysis based on Table 5: Share of total wealth (negative wealth set to zero) and of total household income in each 2% wealth / income band, Scotland 2020-2022, Scottish Government (2025) *Wealth in Scotland 2006-2022* https://data.gov.scot/wealth/#Within_the_population
- ⁵ ONS (September 2025) *Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted*, Tables titled Median pay by region (NUTS1) and Mean pay by region (NUTS2) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/realtimeinformationstatisticsreferencetableseasonallyadjusted>
- ⁶ Resolution Foundation (2025) *What's up?:* <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/whats-up/>
- ⁷ Scottish Fiscal Commission (May 2025) *Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts* <https://fiscalcommission.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Scotlands-Economic-And-Fiscal-Forecasts-May-2025.pdf>
- ⁸ Tax Justice UK (March 2025) *How to raise £60 billion for public services: our ten tax reforms:* <https://taxjustice.uk/blog/how-to-raise-60-billion-for-public-services-our-ten-tax-reforms/>
- ⁹ Tax Justice UK (28 July 2025), *Leading economists call for a wealth tax in the UK:* <https://taxjustice.uk/blog/leading-economists-call-for-a-wealth-tax-in-the-uk/>
- ¹⁰ YouGov (8 July 2025), Poll based on 4,142 adults, *Would you support or oppose introducing a wealth tax of 2% on wealth above £10 million?:* <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2025/07/08/3086a/1>
- ¹¹ Scottish Fiscal Commission (August 2025), *Scottish Spending Review crucial to addressing fiscal challenges:* <https://fiscalcommission.scot/scottish-spending-review-crucial-to-addressing-fiscal-challenges/>
- ¹² Scottish Government, *The Scottish Government's Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan 2025:* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-governments-fiscal-sustainability-delivery-plan/>
- ¹³ Based on probationary teacher salary of £33,594 plus 26% employer pension contributions.
- ¹⁴ Based on Band 5 salary of £31,048 plus 22.5% employer pension contributions.
- ¹⁵ Based on trainee rate salary of £27,178 plus 31.4% employer pension contributions.
- ¹⁶ Based on A3 Grade salary of £25,235 plus 28% employer pension contributions.
- ¹⁷ Based on salary of £26,308 (£14.20 an hour) plus 5.8% employer contributions (based on Strathclyde Pension Scheme employer contributions for that salary band in 2025).
- ¹⁸ Based on an increase of £275m on the existing spend of £470m a year, see SCCS (2025) *Time for Action:* https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Time-for-Action_-_Policies-for-a-greener-fairer-healthier-Scotland.pdf
- ¹⁹ 491,000 households in Scotland were estimated to be in extreme poverty based on the most recent figures. Scottish Government (2025) *Scottish House Condition Survey: 2023 Key Findings:* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-house-condition-survey-2023-key-findings/documents/>
- ²⁰ Fraser of Allander and Child Poverty Action Group modelling suggests a £55 payment would lead to a 3% reduction in child poverty, equivalent to 30,000 children. See <https://fraserofallander.org/publications/mig-recommendations-poverty> and <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-08/Future%20Social%20Security%20Spending%20in%20Scotland.pdf>
- ²¹ Scottish Government (2025) *Fiscal sustainability delivery plan:* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-governments-fiscal-sustainability-delivery-plan/documents/>
- ²² ONS (2025) *Total Wealth: Wealth in Great Britain* Table 2.7 of 'July 2006 to June 2016 and April 2014 to March 2022 edition of this dataset': <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/datasets/totalwealthwealthingreatbritain>
- ²³ Audit Scotland (May 2025) *Local government budgets 2025/26:* <https://audit.scot/publications/local-government-budgets-202526>
- ²⁴ Tax Justice Scotland (August 2025), *Outdated and Unfair: The Case for Council Tax Reform:* https://taxjustice.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Council-Tax-Reform_Tax-Justice-Scotland_August-2025.pdf