

15 Ways The United States Is The Best (At Being The Worst)

Maxwell Strachan: 10/29/2013

We hear it all the time, from every corner of the political sphere: There's no other country on the planet quite like the United States of America. Such pronouncements are typically of the rah-rah variety, and it's indisputably true that this country is exceptional in a large number of ways.

But that is not always necessarily a good thing. Here's what we mean:

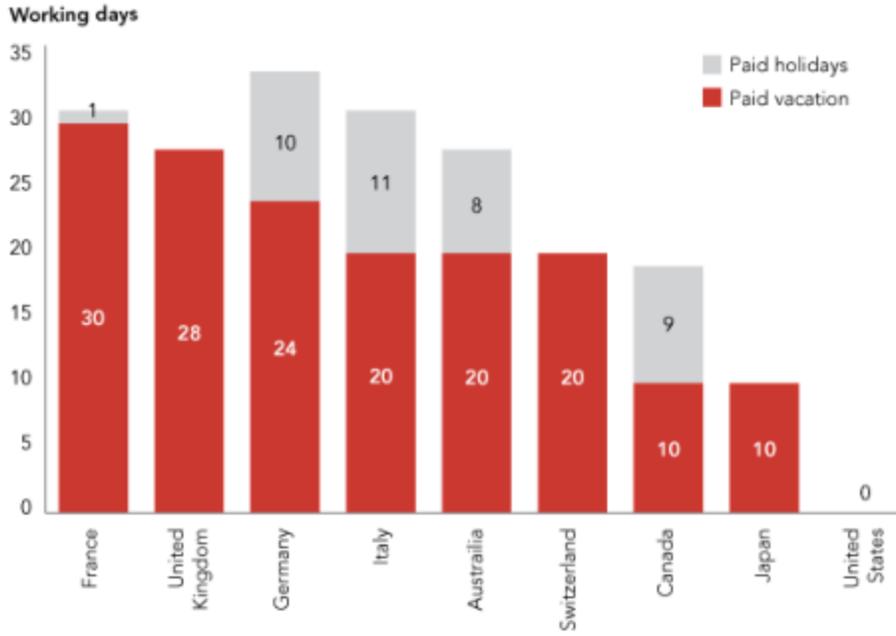
The U.S. joins Lesotho, Swaziland and New Guinea as the only countries in the world not to mandate paid leave for mothers of newborns.



Source: International Labour Organization

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We're also the only "advanced economy" that doesn't require companies to give workers paid vacation.

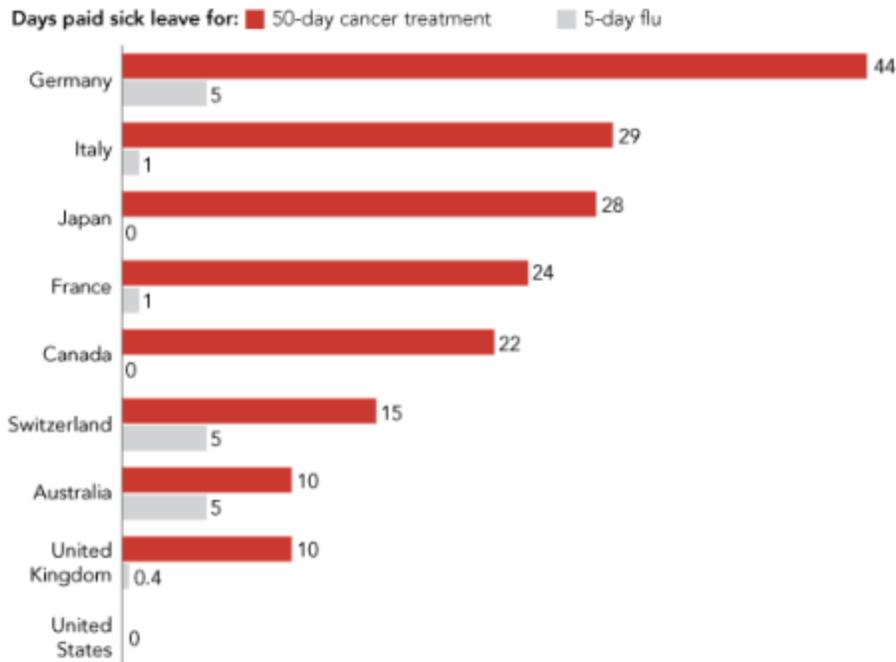


Source: Center for Economic Policy and Research

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We don't even guarantee workers paid sick days.

Calculations are based on paid sick leave guaranteed to workers facing five days of missed work for the flu or a cancer treatment requiring 50 missed days.



Source: Center for Economic Policy and Research

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We spend the most per student on education, but outcomes aren't great.

Expenditure per student, all education levels, in U.S. dollars



Average student performance on the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), age 15



Source: OECD

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We spend more on our military than any other country.

Five countries with the highest military expenditures, in billions of U.S. dollars

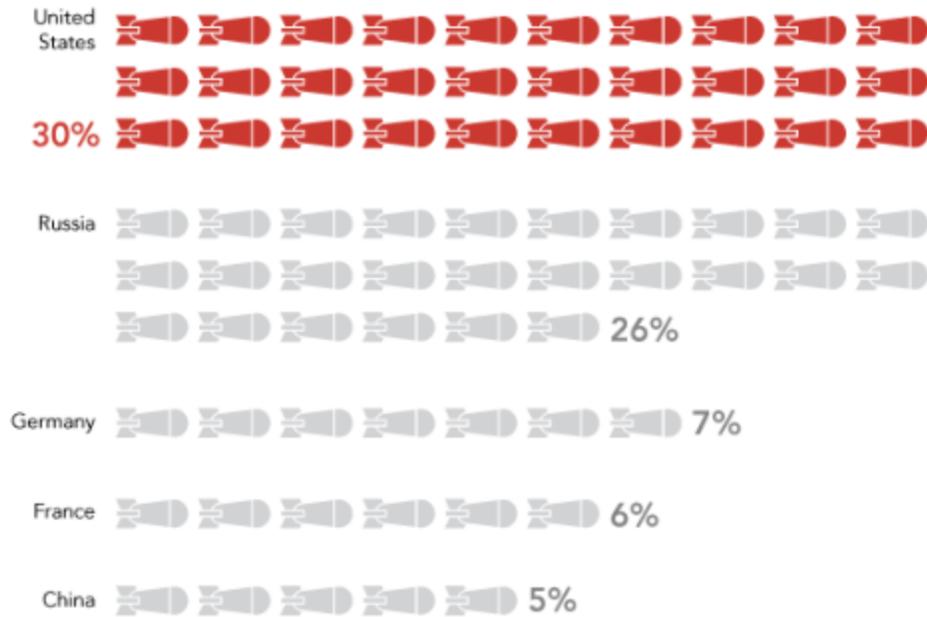


Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

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We export more weapons than any country in the world.

Percentage of export market share

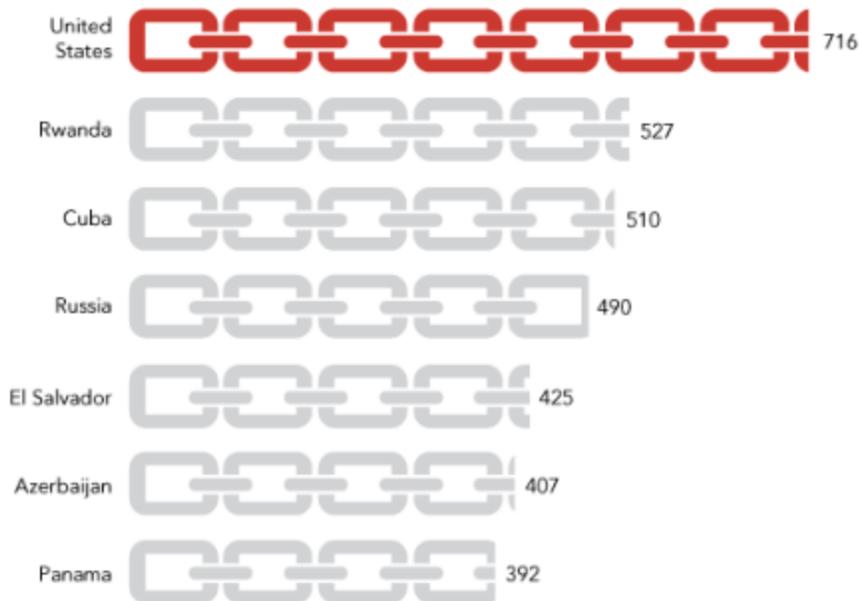


Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

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We incarcerate more of our population than any other country.

Number of prisoners per 100,000 population

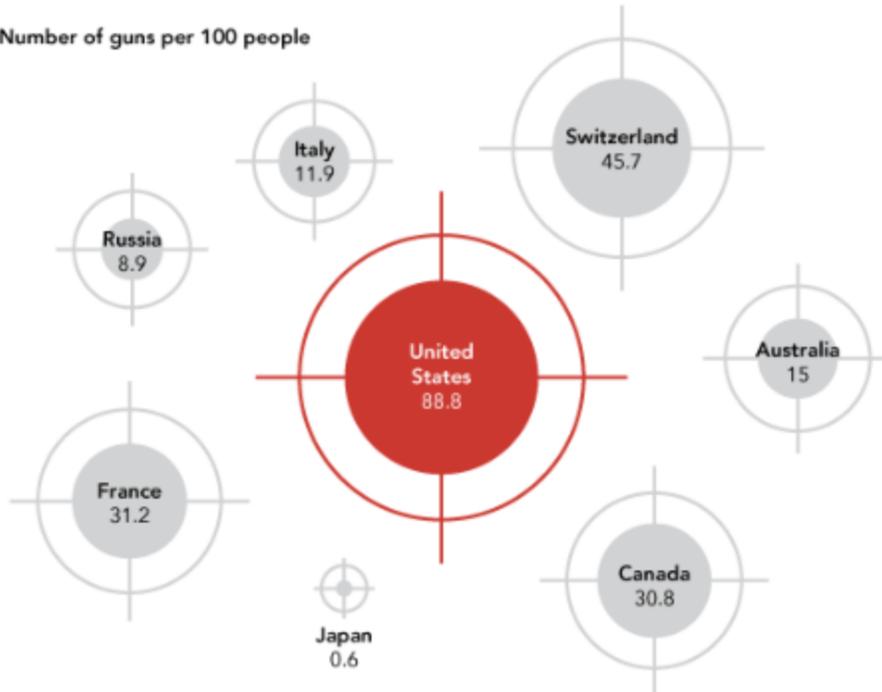


Source: Worldwide; International Centre for Prison Studies; As of February, 2013

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No other country has nearly as many guns as people.

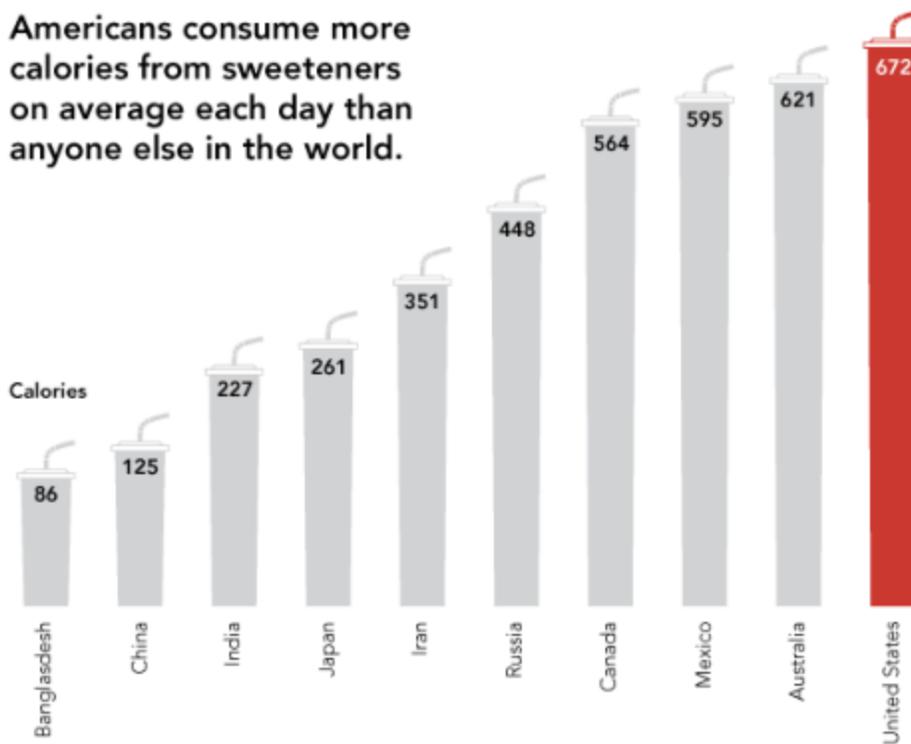
Number of guns per 100 people



Sources : UNODC, Small Arms Survey, Guardian Datablog, *Washington Post*

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Americans consume more calories from sweeteners on average each day than anyone else in the world.



Source: Credit Suisse Group

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We also consume the most calories—a whopping 3770 on average a day.

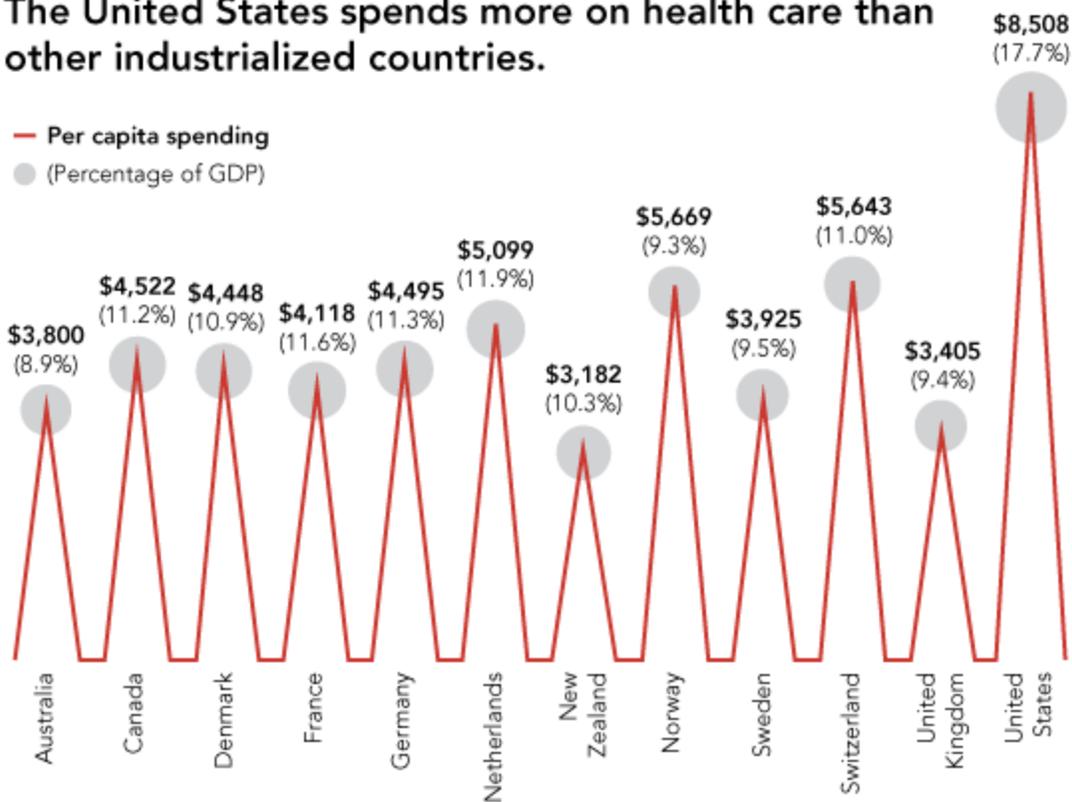
Americans consume about twice as many calories as people in Haiti.



Source: Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations

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The United States spends more on health care than other industrialized countries.

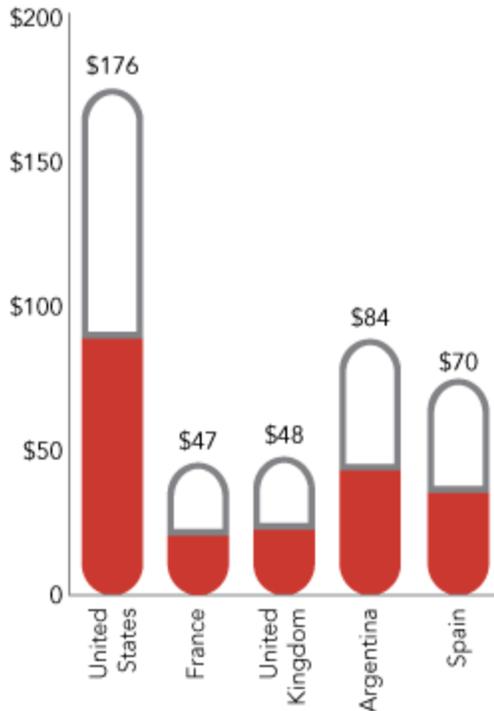


Notes: Data is from 2011 or nearest year. Netherlands spending measured as current expenditure. New Zealand numbers exclude investments.
Source: OECD Health Data 2013

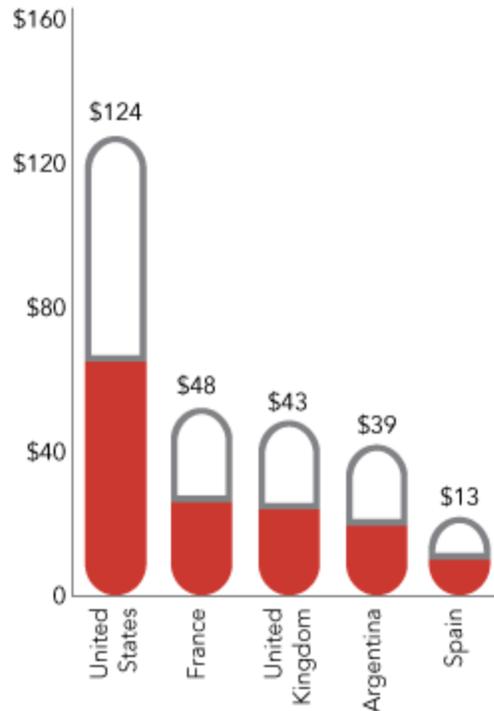
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Prescription drug costs are just one reason health care costs so much.

Cymbalta costs 2012



Lipitor costs 2012

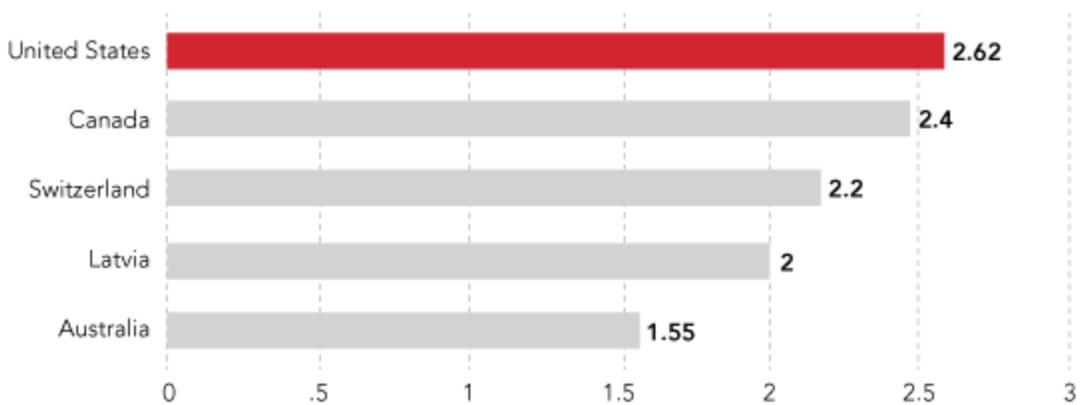


Source: International Federation of Health Plans, 2012

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More babies die the day they are born in the U.S. than in any industrialized country.

First-day mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)

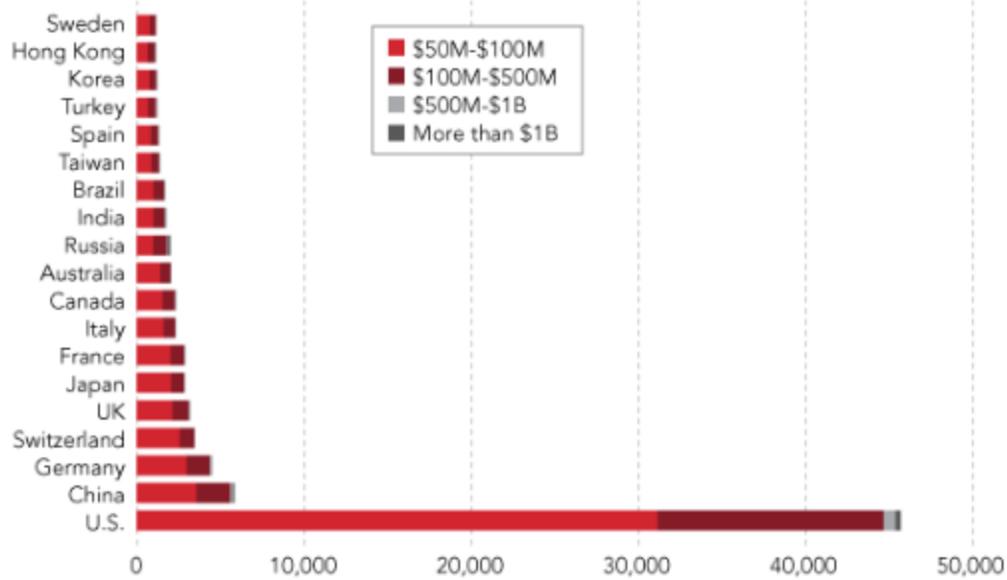


Source: Save the Children

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We're the best at creating super-rich people, at the expense of everyone else.

Ultra high net worth individuals in selected countries, 2013

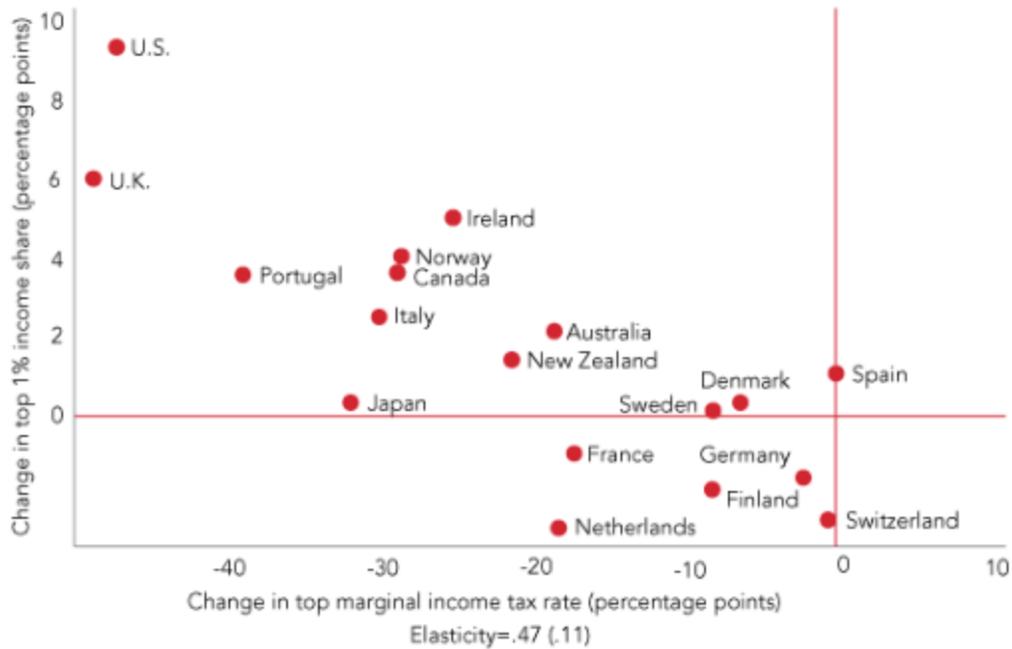


Source: Credit Suisse Research

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Inequality in the U.S. is the worst in the industrialized world.

Changes in top income shares and top marginal tax rates since 1960
(combining both central and local government income taxes)



Source: Journal of Economic Perspectives

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The U.S. is in the top left corner in the above chart -- showing how the country stands out when it comes to income gains by the top 1 percent of earners since 1960. The gains are plotted against changes in marginal income tax rates. The U.S. comes in second (just behind Britain) when it comes to handing these tax breaks out to our highest earners.
