Inequality Trends — 2013–2017

Obama Administration (Second Term)

Metrics and Measured Outcomes

Metric	Observed Change	Score	Interpretation
Real median household income	▲▲ sharp 2015 gain after years of stagnation	-1	Real median household income jumped 5.2% in 2015 alone, the largest one-year gain on record at the time, with growth fastest for the lowest earners as unemployment fell from 7.9% to 4.7% over the term.
Income share of bottom 50%	~modest improvement	+0	A tightening labor market produced genuine gains at the bottom in 2015-16, though this only partially offset the deep divergence of prior decades rather than reversing it.
Wealth share of top 10%	▲ continued rising	+1	An extended equity bull market continued through the term, further concentrating financial wealth among existing asset holders.
Homeownership by age cohort	▼ fell to a 50-year low	+1	The national homeownership rate continued declining through most of the term, reaching its lowest level in roughly five decades before stabilizing near the term's end.
Labor share of national income	~stabilizing, modest improvement late in term	-1	A tightening labor market by 2015-16 gave workers modestly improved bargaining position, interrupting (though not reversing) the decade's downward trend in labor's share.
Intergenerational mobility indicators	~neutral within term	+0	No major structural shift is observable within a single term; these indicators respond to cumulative, multi-decade conditions.

Raw metric total: +0 **External adjustment:** -1 **Net score:** -1

Policy Levers and Their Effects on Inequality

The Affordable Care Act's major coverage provisions took full effect in January 2014, and their measurable results landed squarely within this term: the uninsured rate fell from roughly 13% in 2013 to about 9% by 2015, with the number of uninsured Americans dropping from 33 million to 29 million between 2014 and 2015 alone, and coverage gains concentrated in states that adopted the law's Medicaid expansion. The Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015 made permanent several previously temporary expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, removing years of recurring expiration uncertainty for low- and moderate-income working families.

A tightening labor market produced the term's most significant economy-wide shift: the sharp, broad-based income and poverty improvements recorded in 2015 were explicitly credited by analysts across the political spectrum to a combination of a stronger job market and the ACA's coverage expansion, with income gains that year fastest among the lowest earners. Two Department of Labor rules aimed at protecting workers and retirement savers — an expanded overtime-eligibility rule and a fiduciary-duty rule for retirement advisors — were finalized late in the term but faced legal challenges that blocked or delayed their implementation. An external adjustment of -1 credits the ACA's fully realized coverage effects landing within this specific term, a distinction from the prior term when the law's benefits were still prospective.

Placement on the Wealthy ↔ Common Man Scale

With a net score of **-1**, this period is classified as described below.

Classification: Plus For Common Man