

Arizona Taxes Hit Poor & Middle Class Much Harder than the Wealthy

Low- and middle-income families in Arizona pay a much higher share of their income in state and local taxes than do the richest Arizonans, according to a new study by the Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy.

“State and local governments are being called upon to take on more and more responsibilities,” said Robert S. McIntyre, ITEP’s tax policy director and lead author of the study, titled *Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All 50 States*. “Unfortunately, when it comes to paying for services, Arizona has an unfair tax system.”

Arizona’s Tax Code: Tax the Poor & Middle Class More Than the Wealthy

When all Arizona taxes are totaled up, the study found that:

- The state and local tax rate on the best off one percent of Arizona families—with average incomes of \$869,000—is 6.6% before accounting for the tax savings from federal itemized deductions. After the federal offset, the effective tax rate is only 4.9%.
- The average tax rate on families in the middle of the income distribution—those earning between \$25,000 and \$39,000—is 9.7% before the federal offset and 9.5% after, nearly twice the effective rate on the very richest Arizonans.
- But the tax rate on the poorest Arizona families—those earning less than \$15,000—is the highest of all. At 12.5%, it is more than two and a half times the effective rate on the most well-off.

“Arizona’s small income tax fails to offset the regressivity of its sales and excise taxes, giving the state a regressive tax system,” McIntyre said. “Taxes ought to be based on people’s ability to pay them, which means that the share of income paid in taxes should rise as income grows, not falls as is the case in Arizona.”

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Tax Regressivity Has Worsened Since 1989

The study also examined the impact of changes in the regressivity of Arizona taxes since 1989, when the last cycle of state government shortfalls began. The study's findings include:

- Tax burdens rose significantly on and lower-income families, stayed about the same in the middle ranges, and fell for the best-off fifth of the population.
- The state income tax became somewhat more progressive, but the benefits to low-income taxpayers were outweighed by regressive consumption tax hikes.

"Low- and middle-income taxpayers in Arizona continue to shoulder the highest tax burdens in the state," said McIntyre. "As lawmakers consider budget-balancing strategies in 2003, they should remember that their past actions have served to shift a greater share of the tax burden onto low-income taxpayers."

Two pages of tables detailing the Arizona findings of the study follow

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy is a nonpartisan Washington-based research group. The full *Who Pays?* report is available in PDF format at www.itepnet.org. Printed copies can be ordered by calling ITEP at 202-737-4315.

Who Pays? examines the tax systems of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, using the Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy Microsimulation Tax Model. The ITEP Model is similar in methodology and data sources to the elaborate computer models used by the U.S. Treasury and the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, except that the ITEP Model adds state-by-state estimating capabilities.

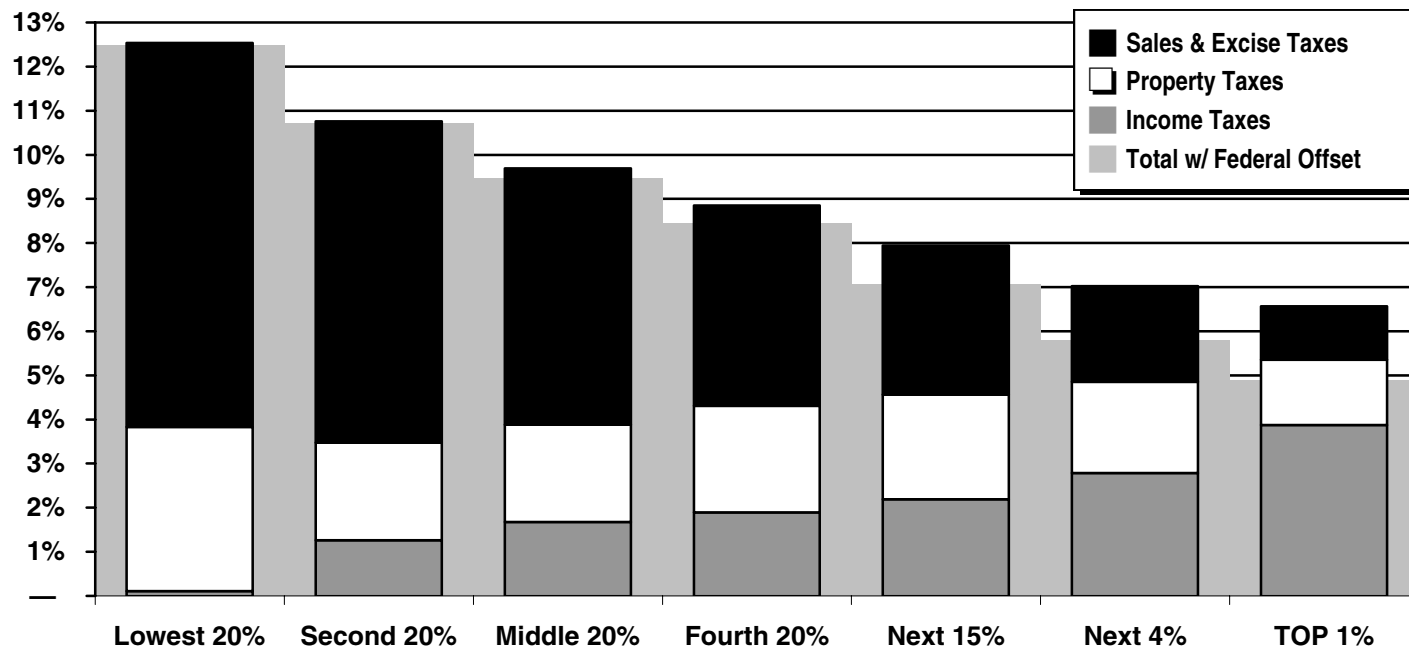
The findings published in the study detail state and local taxes paid by non-elderly couples and individuals. The study includes all major state and local taxes: personal and corporate income taxes, property taxes, and sales and excise taxes.

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Arizona

State & Local Taxes in 2002

Shares of family income for non-elderly taxpayers



Income Group	Lowest 20%	Second 20%	Middle 20%	Fourth 20%	Top 20%		
					Next 15%	Next 4%	TOP 1%
Income Range	Less than \$15,000	\$15,000 – \$25,000	\$25,000 – \$39,000	\$39,000 – \$65,000	\$65,000 – \$127,000	\$127,000 – \$237,000	\$237,000 or more
Average Income in Group	\$9,500	\$20,200	\$31,100	\$50,900	\$86,600	\$168,000	\$869,000
Sales & Excise Taxes	8.7%	7.3%	5.8%	4.5%	3.4%	2.2%	1.2%
General Sales—Individuals	4.5%	4.2%	3.5%	2.8%	2.2%	1.4%	0.8%
Other Sales & Excise—Ind.	2.0%	1.3%	0.9%	0.7%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%
Sales & Excise on Business	2.2%	1.8%	1.4%	1.1%	0.8%	0.5%	0.3%
Property Taxes	3.7%	2.2%	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.1%	1.5%
Property Taxes on Families	3.4%	2.0%	1.9%	2.1%	1.9%	1.6%	0.7%
Other Property Taxes	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%
Income Taxes	0.1%	1.3%	1.7%	1.9%	2.2%	2.8%	3.9%
Personal Income Tax	0.1%	1.2%	1.6%	1.9%	2.1%	2.7%	3.7%
Corporate Income Tax	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
TOTAL TAXES	12.5%	10.8%	9.7%	8.9%	7.9%	7.0%	6.6%
Federal Deduction Offset	-0.1%	-0.0%	-0.2%	-0.4%	-0.9%	-1.2%	-1.7%
TOTAL AFTER OFFSET	12.5%	10.7%	9.5%	8.5%	7.1%	5.8%	4.9%

Note: Table shows 2002 tax law at 2000 income levels.

Arizona Tax Trends

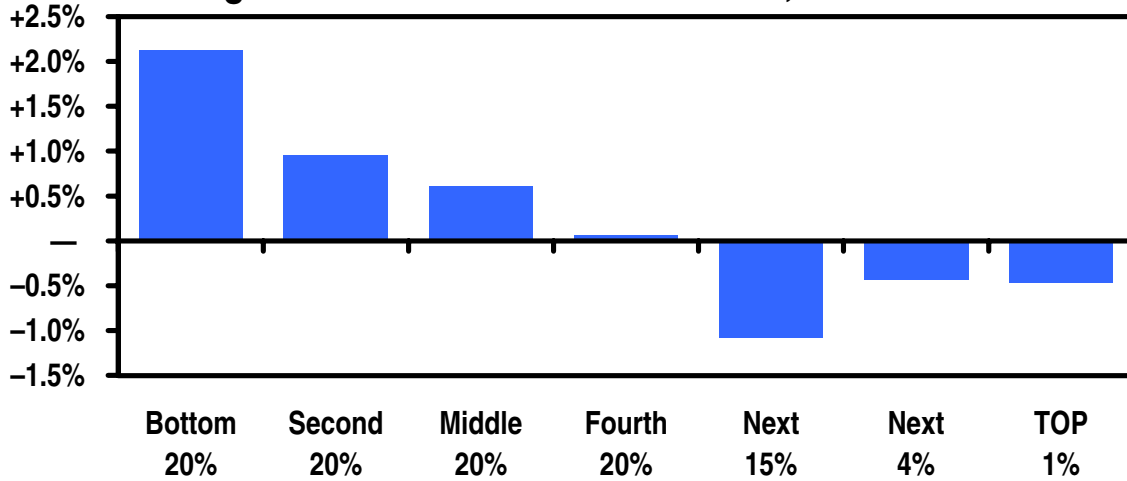
Progressive Features

- ✓ Graduated income tax rates
- ✓ Groceries exempt from sales tax

Regressive Features

- ✗ Heavy reliance on sales and property taxes
- ✗ Income tax not indexed

Changes in Taxes as Shares of Income, 1989 – 2002

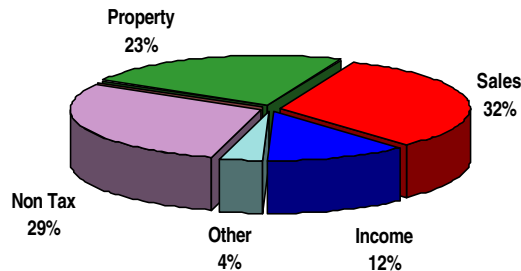


	Bottom 20%	Second 20%	Middle 20%	Fourth 20%	Top 20%		
					Next 15%	Next 4%	TOP 1%
Sales & Excise	+1.8%	+1.2%	+0.9%	+0.6%	+0.5%	+0.3%	+0.1%
Property	+0.7%	+0.1%	+0.2%	-0.0%	-0.9%	-0.5%	-0.4%
Income	-0.3%	-0.3%	-0.4%	-0.6%	-0.7%	-0.2%	+0.3%
Federal Offset	-0.0%	+0.0%	-0.0%	+0.0%	+0.1%	+0.0%	-0.4%
Overall Change	+2.1%	+1.0%	+0.6%	+0.1%	-1.1%	-0.4%	-0.5%

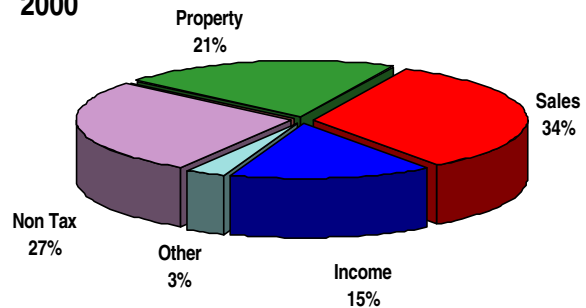
Progressive changes for Arizona include the elimination of the federal tax deduction, the addition of a working family tax credit and the restructuring of the rates to make them far more graduated than they were in 1989. However, for middle and low income taxpayers, these changes were offset by large, regressive increases in sales and excise taxes.

Composition of Revenues

1989



2000



Source: Government Finances, US Department of Census