

Iowa Taxes Hit Poor & Middle Class Harder than the Wealthy

Low- and middle-income families in Iowa pay a higher share of their income in state and local taxes than do the richest Iowans, 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, Iowa has an unfair tax system.”

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

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

- The state and local tax rate on the best off one percent of Iowa families—with average incomes of \$640,000—is 7.9% before accounting for the tax savings from federal itemized deductions. After the federal offset, the effective tax rate is only 5.8%.
- The average tax rate on families in the middle of the income distribution—those earning between \$28,000 and \$44,000—is 10.6% before the federal offset and 10.4% after, nearly double the effective rate the richest pay.
- the tax rate on the poorest Iowa families—those earning less than \$16,000—is 10.6%. It also nearly doubles the effective rate on the very wealthy.

“Iowa’s 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 fall as is the case in Iowa.”

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Tax Regressivity Has Grown Since 1989

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

- Iowa taxes fell sharply on the best-off fifth of the state's families, but remained about the same on the remaining 80 percent.
- An earned-income tax credit helped the poorest Iowans to a limited degree.
- Exempting utilities from the sales tax, a progressive move, countered earlier hikes in the sales tax rate.

"Low- and middle-income taxpayers in Iowa 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 Iowa 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.

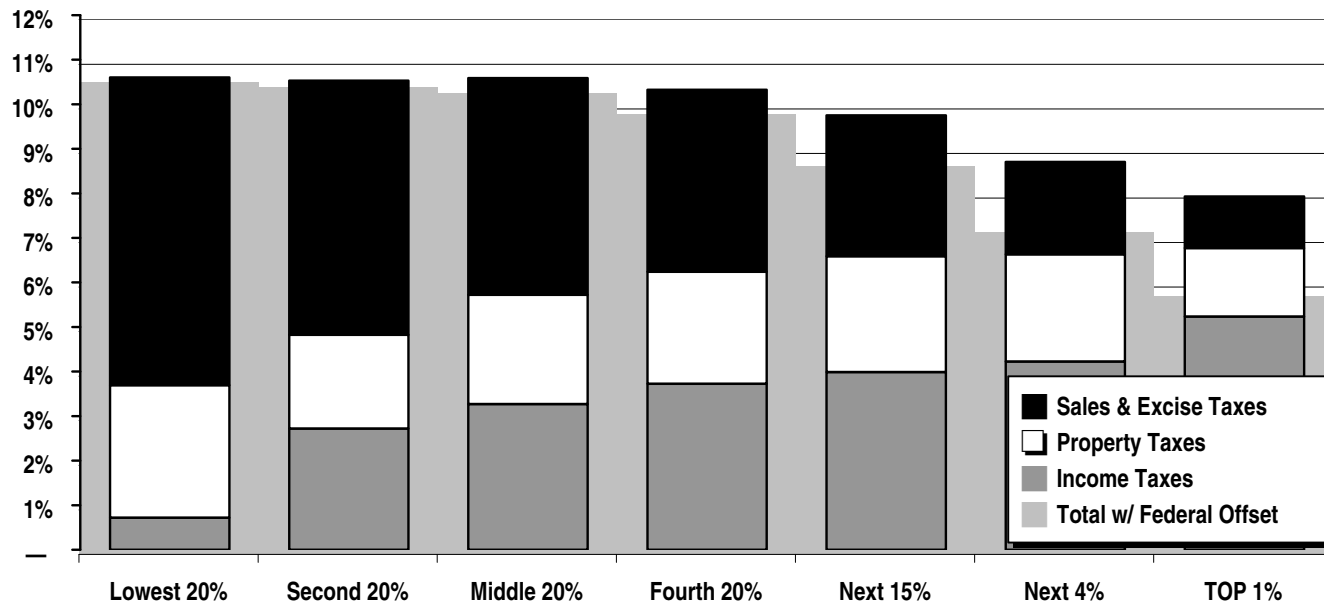
The findings published in the study detail state and local taxes paid by non-elderly couples and individuals. The study includes all major state and local taxes: personal and corporate income taxes, property taxes, and sales and excise taxes.

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Iowa

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 \$14,000	\$14,000 – \$28,000	\$28,000 – \$44,000	\$44,000 – \$65,000	\$65,000 – \$110,000	\$110,000 – \$257,000	\$257,000 or more
Average Income in Group	\$7,900	\$20,800	\$34,600	\$53,700	\$82,100	\$149,000	\$640,100
Sales & Excise Taxes	6.9%	5.7%	4.9%	4.1%	3.2%	2.1%	1.2%
General Sales—Individuals	4.1%	3.6%	3.2%	2.8%	2.2%	1.5%	0.8%
Other Sales & Excise—Ind.	1.2%	0.8%	0.6%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%
Sales & Excise on Business	1.6%	1.3%	1.0%	0.8%	0.6%	0.4%	0.2%
Property Taxes	3.0%	2.1%	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%	2.4%	1.5%
Property Taxes on Families	2.8%	1.9%	2.3%	2.3%	2.2%	1.9%	0.8%
Other Property Taxes	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%
Income Taxes	0.7%	2.7%	3.3%	3.7%	4.0%	4.2%	5.2%
Personal Income Tax	0.7%	2.7%	3.2%	3.7%	4.0%	4.2%	5.1%
Corporate Income Tax	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
TOTAL TAXES	10.6%	10.5%	10.6%	10.3%	9.8%	8.7%	7.9%
Federal Deduction Offset	-0.0%	-0.1%	-0.2%	-0.4%	-1.0%	-1.5%	-2.1%
TOTAL AFTER OFFSET	10.6%	10.5%	10.4%	9.9%	8.7%	7.2%	5.8%

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

Iowa Tax Trends

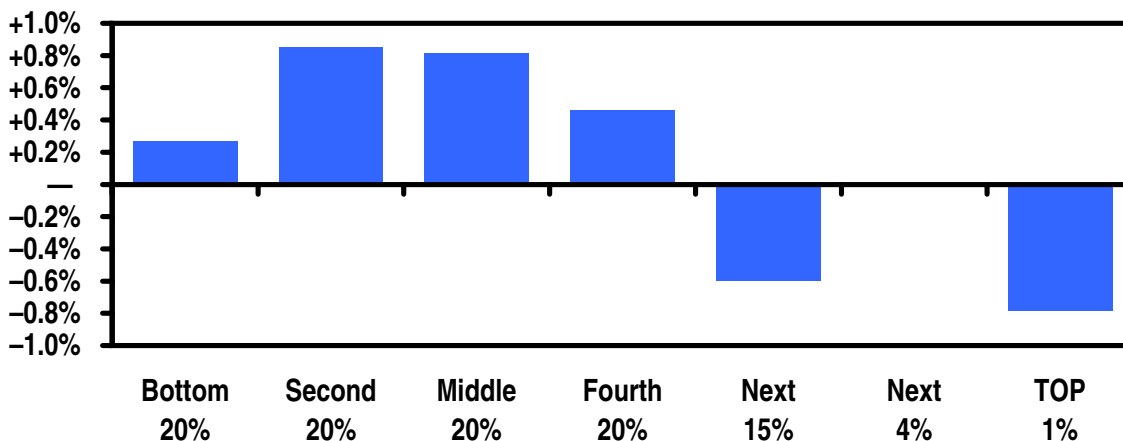
Progressive Features

- ✓ Earned income tax credit
- ✓ Tax brackets and standard deduction indexed
- ✓ Property tax homestead exemption
- ✓ Groceries exempt from sales tax

Regressive Features

- ✗ Deduction for federal income taxes paid

Changes in Taxes as Shares of Income, 1989 – 2002

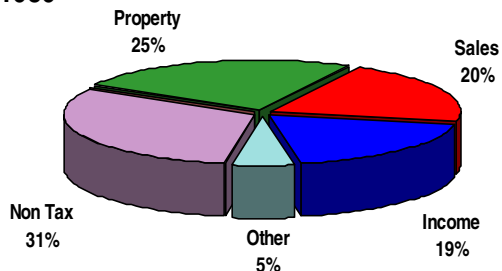


	Bottom 20%	Second 20%	Middle 20%	Fourth 20%	Top 20%		
					Next 15%	Next 4%	TOP 1%
Sales & Excise	+0.5%	+0.5%	+0.5%	+0.4%	+0.3%	+0.2%	+0.1%
Property	-0.3%	-0.1%	+0.3%	+0.0%	-0.8%	-0.1%	-0.4%
Income	+0.0%	+0.4%	+0.1%	+0.1%	+0.0%	+0.1%	-0.1%
Federal Offset	+0.0%	+0.0%	-0.1%	-0.1%	-0.1%	-0.2%	-0.4%
Overall Change	+0.3%	+0.8%	+0.8%	+0.5%	-0.6%	+0.0%	-0.8%

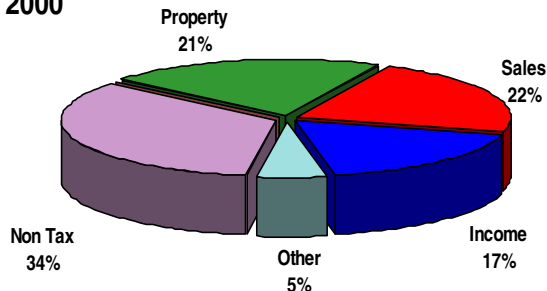
Iowa income tax rates were cut in a regressive way in 1998. Low-income taxpayers benefited somewhat from a new EITC. Iowa increased the state sales tax by 1 percent in the early 1990s, then offset this regressive tax hike by exempting utilities in 2000. Local sales tax authority was also expanded during the 1990s.

Composition of Revenues

1989



2000



Source: Government Finances, US Department of Census