

Supplement to:

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Online Supplement
Even More Unequal Childhoods: 45 Years of Widening Income Gaps in Parental Investments in the United States

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Spending Categories and UCC Codes

Universal Classification Codes (UCCs) for parental investments. Descriptions come from the Consumer Expenditure Survey data dictionary. Some codes were added, withdrawn, or merged over time, so the years each code appears are listed.

UCC Codes for Developmental Spending Categories

Domain	UCC	Description	Years
Extracurriculars	620310	Fees for recreational lessons	1980–2024
	620121	Fees for participant sports	1980–2024
Education	670210	Elementary and high school tuition	1980–2024
	670410	Vocational and technical school tuition	2007–2024
	670901	Other schools tuition	1980–2022
	670902	Other school expenses including rentals	1980–2023
	660210	School books, supplies, equipment for elementary, high school	1980–2023
	660215	School books for elementary and high schools	2021–2024
	660902	School books, supplies, equipment for other schools	2006–2023
	660906	School supplies and equipment	2021–2024
	670903	Test preparation, tutoring services	2009–2024
	660001	Educational books, supplies, and other expenses	2023–2024
Childcare	671000	Prepaid tuition	2023–2024
	340210	Babysitting and child care	1980–2023
	340211	Babysitting and child care in your own home	1993–2013
	340212	Babysitting and child care in someone else's home	1993–2013
	660900	School books, supplies, equipment for day care, nursery, preschool	1980–2022
	660901	School books, supplies, equipment for day care, nursery	2006–2023
	670310	Day care centers, nursery, and preschools	1980–2023
	670320	Babysitting, childcare, daycare, and preschool	2023–2024

Sensitivity to Winsorizing

The main analysis winsorizes positive spending values within each category and year at the 99.9th percentile to limit the influence of a small number of extreme self-reported values. Figure S1 compares the resulting total per-child estimates to two alternatives: estimates with no winsorizing and estimates winsorizing each category at the more aggressive 99th percentile. Because very large expenditures are reported almost exclusively by high-income families, the choice mainly affects the level of the Top 10% group and leaves the other three unchanged. The pattern is the same across all three rules.

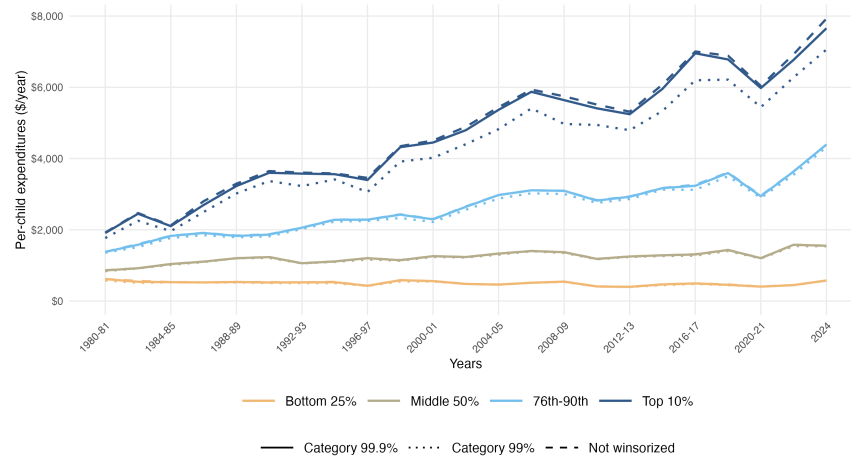


Figure S1. Total Parental Investment Spending Under Alternative Winsorizing Rules, 1980-2024.
Dollar values are in 2024 dollars. Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey.

Before- and After-Tax Income Groups

The main analysis assigns income groups using within-year before-tax income, because after-tax income measures are unavailable for 2024. As a robustness check, Figure S2 overlays the total per-child estimates using both income measures: before-tax groups (dashed lines) and after-tax groups (solid lines). The two sets of estimates track each other closely and the substantive conclusions are unchanged.

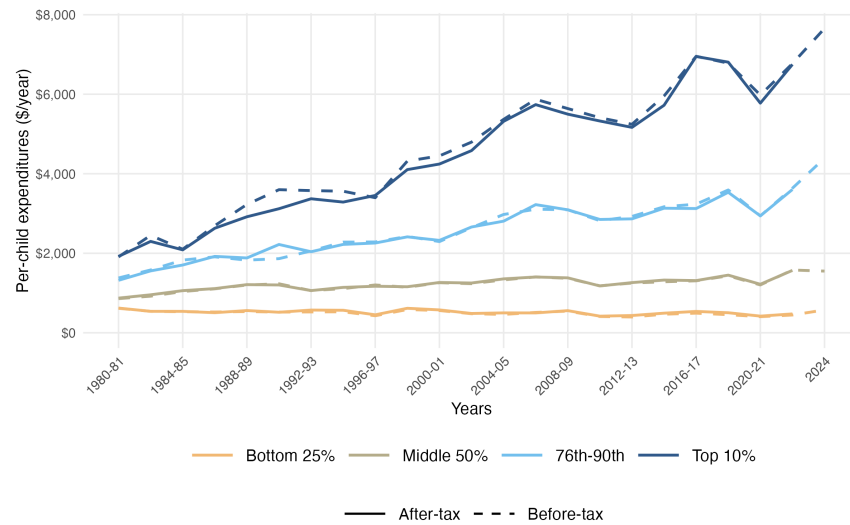


Figure S2. Total Parental Investment Spending Using Before- and After-Tax Income Groups, 1980-2024. After-tax income is unavailable for 2024. Dollar values are in 2024 dollars. Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey.

Sensitivity to National Income Group Cutpoints

The main analysis assigns income groups using cutpoints computed within the analytic sample of families with children and an oldest parent ages 25 to 65. Figure S3 compares this approach to one using national cutpoints computed from all CEX Interview Survey consumer units (including families without children and single-person households). The mean spending is lower for the top income groups because more families are in them (i.e., more than 10% of the families with children are in the top 10% of the national income distribution). The two methods yield the same substantive pattern of widening income-group gaps.

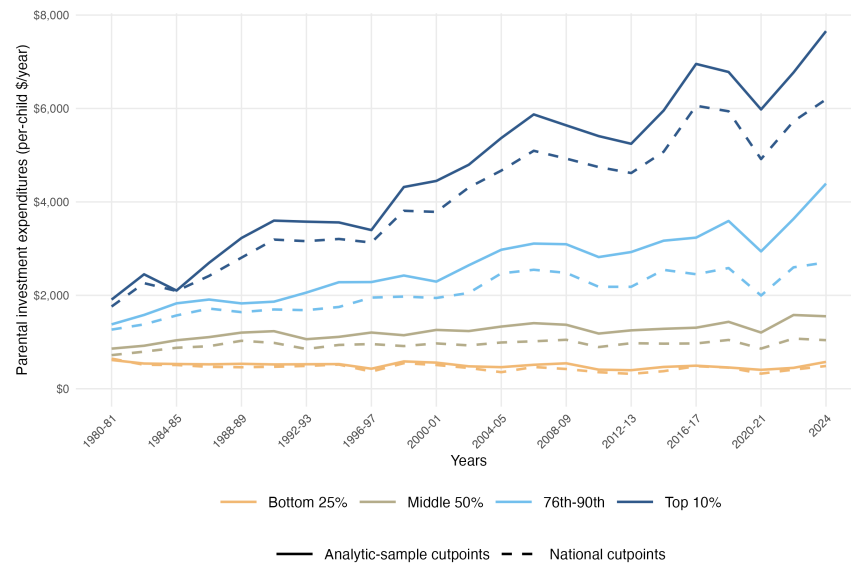


Figure S3. Total Parental Investment Spending Using Analytic-Sample and National Income Group Definitions, 1980-2024. Dollar values are in 2024 dollars. Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey.

Sensitivity to Excluding Childcare

A substantial share of families use no formal childcare and instead rely on kin or informal arrangements, so childcare spending can conflate the level of investment with the form of care more so than the other two categories (though both extracurriculars and schooling can function as a place to have children cared for, alongside the investment component). Figure S4 shows the same result as Figure 1 in the main text, but excluding paid childcare. Income gaps still widen substantially. For example, in 2024, the Top 10% spent over 13 times more than the Bottom 25%, compared to just 4 times more in 1980-1981. While the trends remain the same, the dollar amounts of parental investments are, of course, lower than in Figure 1, because childcare was a substantial portion of the total parental investment spending measure (a choice consistent with prior work).

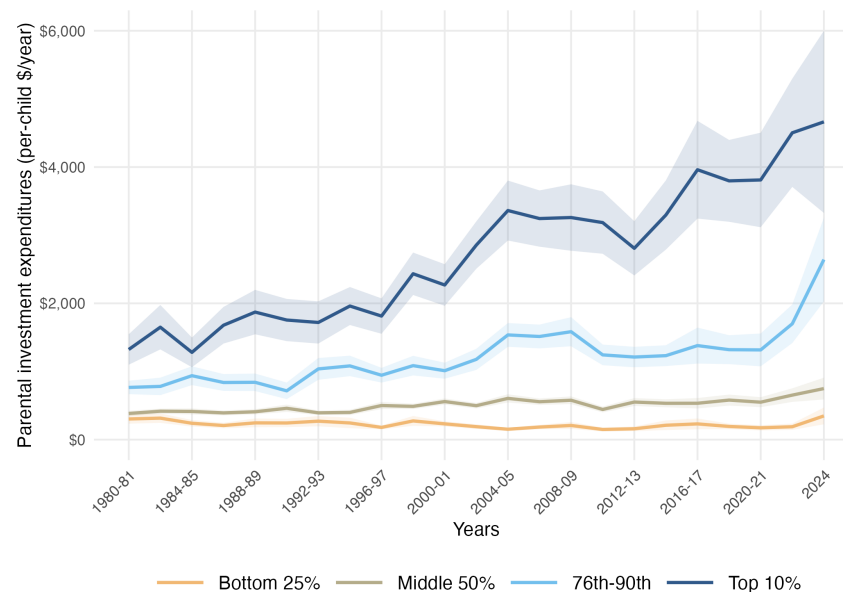


Figure S4. Total Parental Investment Spending Without Childcare, 1980-2024. Per-child expenditures in 2-year bins; 2024 is a single year. Ribbons show 95% confidence intervals. Dollar values are in 2024 dollars. Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey.