

Re: Copper theft

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- *From:* David Brown <david.brown@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 23 Sep 2006 14:22:59 +0200
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dagmargoodboat@xxxxxxxx wrote:

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<snip European per-capita GDP chart>

These figures are already scaled in the mythical "parity purchasing power" (it's mythical, since different things cost different amounts in different countries – there can be no single scale factor. In Norway, for example, material goods are cheap, but services are expensive). Thus differences such as cheaper oil in the USA will scale in the favour of the USA. Looking at the nominal figures (not adjusted by cost of living estimates) puts the USA at about \$20,000 below Norway.

I'm not going to defend parity purchasing power as _the_ end-all, be-all prognosticator; The relative importance of various purchases can be debated endlessly, as can the distribution of wealth, fairness, who buys what, etc. The data was there, so I cut and pasted it. The PPP adjustments are modest, with the exception of Norway, where a large part of GDP comes from oil exports and is not individual income in the ordinary sense. Here's the raw data in official currency units for comparison:

	Population	Per capita	GDP	Debt	(PPP)	off. curr	(% GDP)	Unemployment
Belguim	10,379,067	\$33,751	\$31,400	94.3	8.4%			
France	60,876,136	33,757	29,900	66.2	9.9%			
Germany	82,422,299	33,122	30,400	67.3	11.7%			
U.K.	60,609,153	36,760	30,300	43.1	4.7%			
Norway	4,610,820	53,548	42,300	50.1	4.6%			
Spain	40,397,842	25,224	25,500	42.9	9.2%			
Italy	58,133,509	29,415	29,200	108.8	7.7%			

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Netherlands 16,491,461 35,249 30,500 52.7 6.6%
Isle of Man 75,441 28,500 — 0.6%
United States 298,444,215 41,850 41,800 64.7 5.1%

Norwegian oil revenue, per capita: \$12,347
(assumes \$45/bbl, 2001 exportation level)

Additionally, these figures are based on arithmetic mean averages, and are therefore skewed by the USA's greater spread of incomes. The GDP(PPP) may represent the average purchasing power of citizens, but it doesn't represent the purchasing power of the average citizen.

One could also argue that certain pockets of the US population unfairly drag the average down. One year after Katrina, 80% of the 100K+ refugees who fled to Houston are still unemployed—what's that about?

<http://abstractnonsense.wordpress.com/2006/08/29/the-usas-economic-inequality/>

Again, this argument is unwinnable. Since the issue was the affordability of transportation, a more proper comparison might be disposable income, and include the fact that, whatever a European makes, he keeps less after taxes.

Here's my only current anecdote: a good friend of mine, a minister, returned to his native Germany circa 2000–1. There, he reported making the same salary in DM as he had made \$ in the US, but the exchange rate was, very roughly, 2 DM per \$. His taxes, however, were the same in both countries when expressed in US dollars.

He did get various offsetting benefits, but the net effect was that he was struggling, and had no money in his pocket.

Best regards,
James Arthur

I tried Googling for figures on disposable income, but I didn't really get much. There were various reports for the USA, but I could not see any sensible comparisons for other countries.

Ultimately, of course, it is all statistics – and it is easy to choose the values you want to match the results you want. If you wanted to make Americans appear richer than Norwegians, you could look at the numbers of cars per family – while if you wanted to make Norwegians look better, you'd look at housing, especially towards the lower end of society.

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