

LEAGUE PHASE MOTION 1:

A fair society should not have billionaires

Since the world's first billionaire emerged in 1916, the total number has grown to over 3,400 today. While some see the value in the growth and investment that billionaires create, others are becoming increasingly concerned about inequality and the distribution of wealth. They question whether fairness means allowing individuals to accumulate extreme wealth, or whether it requires limits on personal fortunes.

Those who support this motion may point out that while billionaires hold an exceptionally large concentration of wealth, many people around the world cannot meet their basic needs. They may posit that if wealth was redistributed, governments could invest more in tackling poverty and world hunger. The proposition may also argue that such wealth is not solely the result of an individual's own efforts, but also depends on the labour of others and passive income from investments. Furthermore, they may raise concerns about democracy, arguing that huge fortunes can translate into political influence, lobbying power, and greater control over media or public debate.

On the other hand, opponents may suggest that the possibility of becoming extremely wealthy is motivating: it encourages entrepreneurship, innovation, and the development of new technologies by allowing people to benefit from the rewards of their success. Billionaires may invest in businesses and research, creating jobs and boosting the economy, which they argue benefits society as a whole. The opposition may also point to the philanthropic work of some billionaires, which has contributed to reducing poverty, improving education and enhancing health outcomes in lower-income countries. Perhaps the real issue is inequality, rather than the existence of billionaires themselves.

This motion raises important questions about fairness, opportunity, and how wealth is created and distributed. Should a fair society seek to prevent the existence of billionaires, or should it focus instead on ensuring that everyone has access to opportunities and a decent standard of living?

Debate it!



Where can I learn more?

1. Watch Concern's explainer video on global poverty
2. Watch this video on why we pay taxes
3. Use the Concern Debates Trello Board
4. Listen to our Debating Development podcasts
5. Find our SDG lesson resources on our website
6. Continue your learning with our Speak Act Do programme

What can I do next?

Research

Organisations like Financial Justice Ireland have information and resources on wealth inequality and global financial justice

Speak Out

Contact your local TD or MP to voice your views, or join a campaign such as this one led by Oxfam

Lend a Hand

You could volunteer your time for those experiencing inequality or unfairness, such as homelessness, discrimination or isolation

