

Do rich people really not care about anyone?

November 1 2016, by Greg Hadley, McClatchy Washington Bureau

Rich people. They're nothing like us. They've got more money, more things and, according to a recent study, less time to waste on simply noticing other people.

In *Psychological Science*, a research journal, a group of New York University academics tested this phenomenon in a series of studies designed to quantitatively measure whether someone's socioeconomic class was related to how closely they paid attention to others.

In the end, they concluded that yes, [people](#) who identified themselves as wealthy spent less time looking at other people and were less likely to notice changes in other people's expression.

In one study, participants walked down a city street wearing Google Glass. The research team told participants they were merely trying out the new technology, but afterward they used Glass to measure how long users focused on certain objects or people. They found that those who said they were wealthy did not let their eyes rest on people for as long as those who said they were from a lower social class.

In another, researchers had participants view a computer screen with images taken from Google Maps Street View and tracked their eye movement. Once again, the more wealthy people spent less time looking at the people on the screen.

Lastly, the academics showed participants two pictures containing similar objects and faces. The two images flickered back and forth

between each other until the viewer indicated that he or she had noticed a difference between them. The wealthy participants were less likely to notice a difference between faces, but they were just as likely to spot a difference between the objects.

All of the studies used separate sets of [participants](#).

In a press release, two of the researchers hypothesized that the results of the study are due to the fact that people view others in terms of how much they might impact themselves, either as a benefit or a risk. The wealthy, they said, are less likely to see others as capable of impacting their lives and thus unconsciously spend less time looking at them.

But this study is just the latest in a series of many that seem to show the well-off lack interpersonal skills. Dating back to 2009, studies have shown that rich people fail to engage with strangers as much as their poorer counterparts, have a harder time reading other people's emotions, are less empathetic and react less strongly to seeing depictions of suffering. Rich people are also no more likely to be happy than poor people. That's dependent on how much one is respected or admired by their peers.

©2016 McClatchy Washington Bureau
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Do rich people really not care about anyone? (2016, November 1) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-11-rich-people.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--