

## **The Perfect Storm: Inequality and the gilet jaunes**

Regular readers of my work since 2008 will have noticed my emphasis on *inequality* as the driver of social and political problems across the Western and developing worlds. Now in France we have a violent outpouring of anger, directed at regime change, no less. It is a revolutionary movement, arising out of a conflation of despair, anger and a sense of injustice.

Many of those protesting feel neglected, oppressed and dominated. They are not mostly Parisiennes, they have traveled in from the suburbs and the regions. For the most part they're employed, but *their incomes don't meet their needs despite the exhaustion they feel from their work*. This is as true for households where more than one adult is working as for those with a single earner. The traditional promise of being able to live off one's income from full time work no longer holds true. It's no longer possible for somebody to lead their life as they please, or to make their own choices. How can autonomy be achieved if the riches of society are shared so unfairly?

I don't have access to figures from France, but this 2018 American review of who's been getting pay rises since the 1970's spells out the growth of inequality so clearly. Only the top 1% have done well. The rest are flatlining.

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Again, these are US figures but the phenomenon of wage stagnation exists across the developed world. So people are producing more, working harder and/or smarter and earning less. No wonder their rage is so strong!

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