

Forbes Billionaires 2018: Meet The Richest People On The Planet



Luisa Kroll, FORBES STAFF ✓

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By **Kerry A. Dolan** and **Luisa Kroll**

The gap between the really rich and the merely rich continues to widen, as fortunes soar to new heights. A record 2,208 billionaires made Forbes' 32 annual ranking of the world's billionaires. Altogether they are worth a record \$9.1 trillion, up 18% from a year ago. The 20 richest people on the planet are worth a staggering \$1.2 trillion, a sum roughly equivalent to the annual economic output of Mexico. In aggregate, they may represent less than 1% of total billionaires but their riches amount to 13% of the total fortune of all billionaires worldwide.

[Jeff Bezos](#) is the richest person on the planet and the first centi-billionaire atop our annual ranking. Shares of his e-commerce giant Amazon rose 59% in 12 months, helping boost his fortune by \$39.2 billion. It was the biggest one year gain since Forbes started tracking billionaires in 1987. He easily moved ahead of Microsoft cofounder [Bill Gates](#), who ceded the top spot for only the sixth time since 1995.

France's [Bernard Arnault](#) had the second best year after Bezos. Record results at his luxury goods empire LVMH and a deal to buy out nearly all of Christian Dior helped boost Arnault's fortune by \$30.5 billion. He is the richest European for the first time since 2012 and number four richest in the world.



Jeff Bezos is the richest person on the planet and the first centi-billionaire atop our annual ranking. (Photographer: [+]

Two tech entrepreneurs from mainland China climbed into the top 20 for the first time. [Ma Huateng](#) (also known as Pony Ma) is Asia's wealthiest person, ranked number 17 in the world, thanks in part to his firm Tencent's WeChat, a ubiquitous social-messaging app with nearly 1 billion active users. Tencent also has stakes in Tesla, Snapchat parent Snap and music-streaming service Spotify. [Jack Ma](#), the 20th richest person, is the chief of another e-commerce giant Alibaba, whose shares increased 76% in a year.

Forbes pinned down 259 newcomers who made their fortunes in everything from tech and aerospace to private aviation and wedding dresses. China has the most new faces with 89, while the U.S. is next with 18. That is helping close the gap between the two nations. Altogether the U.S. has more billionaires than any country in the world with 585, while greater China (mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) has 476.

On this year's list, the billionaires hail from 72 countries and territories, including the first ever from Hungary and Zimbabwe. One country not represented: Saudi Arabia. Forbes chose to leave off all 10 Saudis given reports of asset seizures after the Saudi Crown Prince detained some 200 people, including some billionaires, some for as long as three months.

While the vast majority of the world's billionaires added to their fortunes in the past 12 months, 16% had fortunes that slipped. One notable loser was President [Donald Trump](#), whose fortune fell \$400 million since March 2017 to a current \$3.1 billion. He is now ranked 766 in the world, down from 544.

Go [here](#) for the full list of all the world's billionaires.

Methodology

The *Forbes* World's Billionaires list is a snapshot of wealth using stock prices and exchange rates from February 9, 2018. Some people will become richer or poorer within weeks—even days—of publication. For example, Jeff Bezos' net worth climbed more than \$12 billion in the two weeks between our measuring date for stock prices and when this issue went to press. We list individuals rather than multigenerational families who share large fortunes, though we include wealth belonging to a billionaire's spouse and children if that person is the founder of the fortune. In some cases we list siblings or couples together if the ownership breakdown among them isn't clear, but here an estimated net worth of \$1 billion per person is needed to make the cut. We value a variety of assets, including private companies, real estate, art, yachts and more. We don't pretend to know each billionaire's private balance sheet (though some provide it). When documentation isn't supplied or available, we discount fortunes. For daily updates of net worths, go to forbes.com/real-time-billionaires.

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