

The high (and low) cost of living well

Since the 1970s, Forbes has been calculating what it calls the CLEWI — the Cost of Living Extremely Well Index. While the consumer price index (CPI), which roughly measures the increase in the cost of living for more average Americans, has doubled since 1982, the CLEWI has almost quadrupled. But have the wallets of the rich been hurt? Hardly. As the dotted line indicates, the very rich have gotten much, much richer over the same period — by a factor of ten, in fact. So these days the 400 are spending a much smaller percentage of their wealth living extremely well than a quarter of a century ago.

A sampling of the 41 items that comprise the Cost of Living Extremely Well Index:

