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# The world's oldest billionaires

Most of the billionaires in the age-90-plus generation got rich the old-fashioned way: coming up through blue-collar backgrounds and picking up street smarts along the way.

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By [Forbes.com](#)

There's new money, there's old money, then [there's really old money](#). And they're different.

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Forbes' annual list of the world's billionaires. When we put it together in March, we found sources of wealth for the old crowd are mostly 180 degrees from those of the young turks on the list.

The old guard comes largely from blue-collar family backgrounds during an era when college was truly for the sons of privilege. They made their money incrementally, in old-line industries such as oil and banking, after young lives spent toiling at odd jobs brought savvy and street smarts.

Most of the young'uns are graduate-school-educated and made their piles through financial engineering or mastering the art of Internet commerce. That group, of course, includes **Google** ([GOOG](#), [news](#), [msgs](#)) co-founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page, a pair of 34-year-olds with master's degrees from Stanford University who are each worth more than \$18 billion.

Both are included among the 16 youngest billionaires, along with fellow former Stanford grad student Jerry Yang, 38, the chief executive of **Yahoo** ([YHOO](#), [news](#), [msgs](#)). Globally, the tech-savvy crowd of billionaires under 40 includes Chinese Internet guru William Ding, the founder of Web portal **NetEase** ([NTES](#), [news](#), [msgs](#)), and Indian online gambling entrepreneur Anurag Dikshit, who owns a third of the popular site **PartyGaming** ([PYGMF](#), [news](#), [msgs](#)).

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Overall, seven of the 16 youngest guns hail from China, India or Russia, three of the globe's fastest-growing economies. Meanwhile, aside from the Google and Yahoo guys, the only American among the 16 is publishing heir Daniel Ziff, who now runs a hedge fund.

By contrast, only two of the 16 oldest billionaires come from outside the U.S. or Western Europe: Y.C. Wang of Taiwan and Saleh Al Rajhi of Saudi Arabia.

And though the members of the older generation may not have had books, they had brains. Many of them got rich in businesses that related to their early jobs.

John Simplot, a high school dropout from the Midwest, bought and sold hogs in his youth after moving to Idaho from Iowa at an early age. He eventually plowed the profits into the potato business, where he grew his company to a \$3 billion-a-year enterprise that became the biggest supplier for McDonald's french fries. Simplot, 98, is now worth \$3.6 billion.

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CNBC's Brian Shactman takes a look at Forbes' list of America's richest people.

[Kirk Kerkorian](#) was an immigrant's son who never went to college but who parlayed his aviation experience during World War II into his own charter airline. After selling that business, he made billions in the hotel-casino industry. Ever active at age 90, Kerkorian has bought big stakes in Chrysler and **General Motors** ([GM](#), [news](#), [msgs](#)) in recent years, in an attempt to shake up

management before selling out. Kerkorian, now worth about \$18 billion, placed seventh on this year's Forbes 400.

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The old-school work ethic of the 90-plus generation isn't limited to American shores. Self-made European billionaires include a pair Germans, retail magnate Hugo Mann and supermarket-chain founder Eugen Viehof, plus Swiss data-processing executive Walter Haefner.

One thing the oldest and youngest do have in common: Most were self-made. Thirteen of the 16 billionaires who have hit age 90 built their fortunes themselves -- the three exceptions being U.S. oil-family scion David Rockefeller, Danish shipping-company executive Maersk Mc-Kinney Møller and Saudi banker Al Rajhi. The count among the youngest billionaires: 10 of 16 did it on their own.

The five oldest billionaires:

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Net worth</b>	<b>Country</b>
<a href="#">John Simplot</a>	98	\$3.6 billion	United States
<a href="#">Walter Haefner</a>	97	\$4.3 billion	Switzerland
<a href="#">Saleh Al Rajhi</a>	95	\$4.4 billion	Saudi Arabia
<a href="#">Maersk Mc-Kinney Møller</a>	94	\$1.8 billion	Denmark
<a href="#">Hugo Mann</a>	94	\$2.7 billion	Germany

[See the rest on the list](#)

*This article was reported and written by Tom Van Riper for Forbes.com.*