

How Inequality Damages Us All

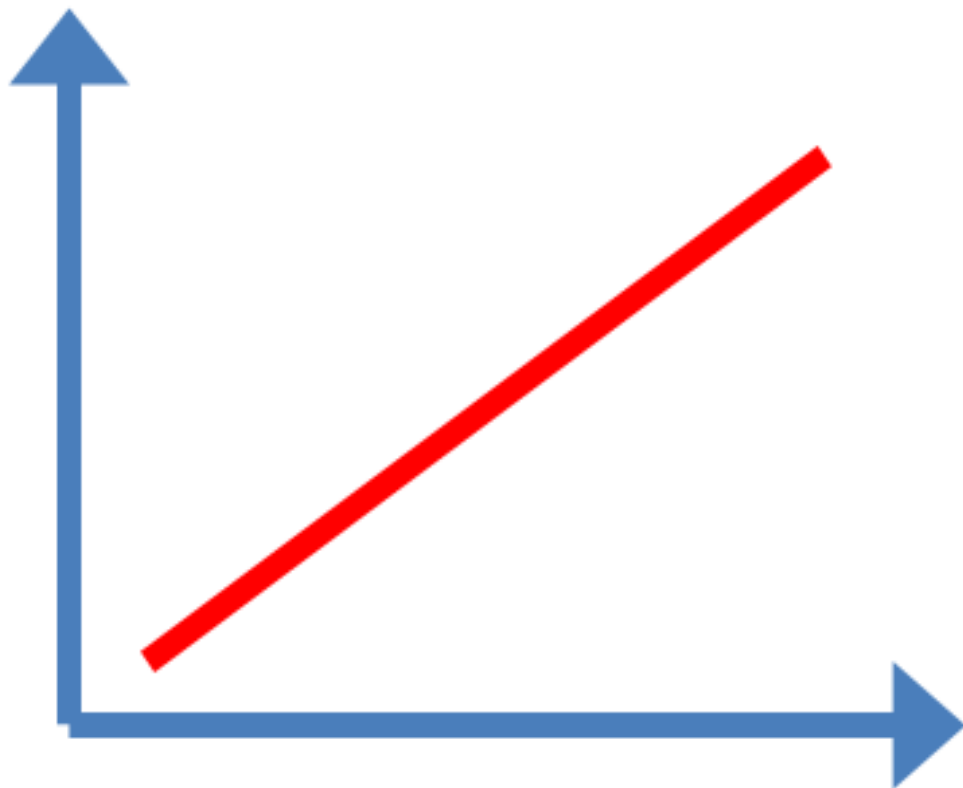
Richard Wilkinson

Emeritus Professor of Social Epidemiology



Photo by kind permission of Matt Stuart

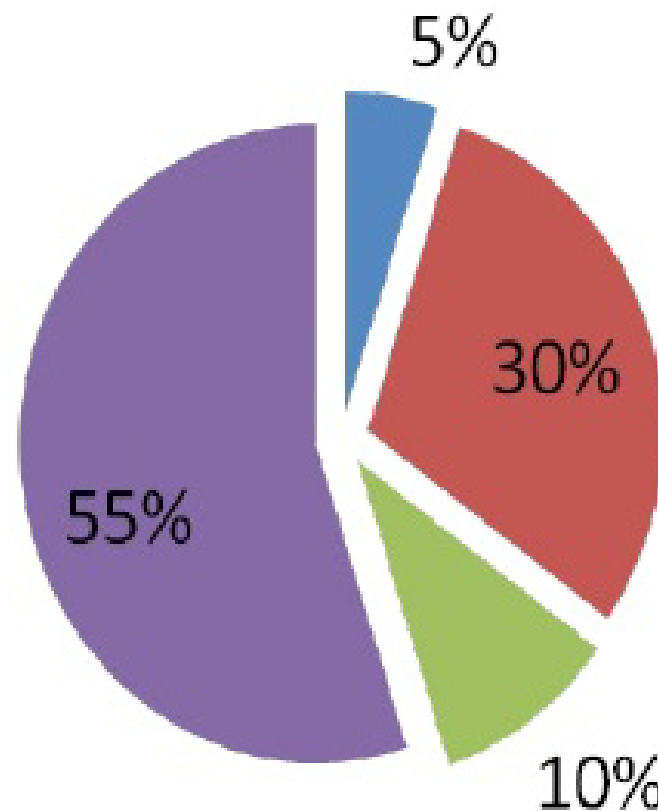
Problems



**Income
inequality**

What Determines Health Status?

■ Genetics ■ Behavior ■ Health Care ■ Social Conditions



Source: World Health Organization, *Report of the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health*, 2008.
See also Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Report, *Beyond Health Care: New Directions to a Healthier America* and CDC, *Healthy People 2020*.

Individual differences will explain who falls, but the height of the hurdles will explain how many fall



Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902) German pathologist



"Medicine is a social science and politics are nothing else than medicine on a large scale."

Walker, R. *et al.*
Poverty in global perspective.
Journal of Social Policy
2013; 42, 215-233

The experience of poverty in rural Uganda and India;
urban China, Pakistan, Korea, United Kingdom and Norway.

"Respondents universally despised poverty and frequently despised themselves for being poor. Parents were often despised by their children, women despised their men-folk and some men were reported to take out their self-loathing on their partners and children. Despite respondents generally believing that they had done their best against all odds, they mostly considered that they had both failed themselves by being poor and that others saw them as failures. This internalisation of shame was further externally reinforced in the family, the workplace and in their dealings with officialdom. Even children could not escape this shaming far, with the possible exception of Pakistan, school was an engine of social grading, a place of humiliation for those without the possessions that guaranteed social acceptance.

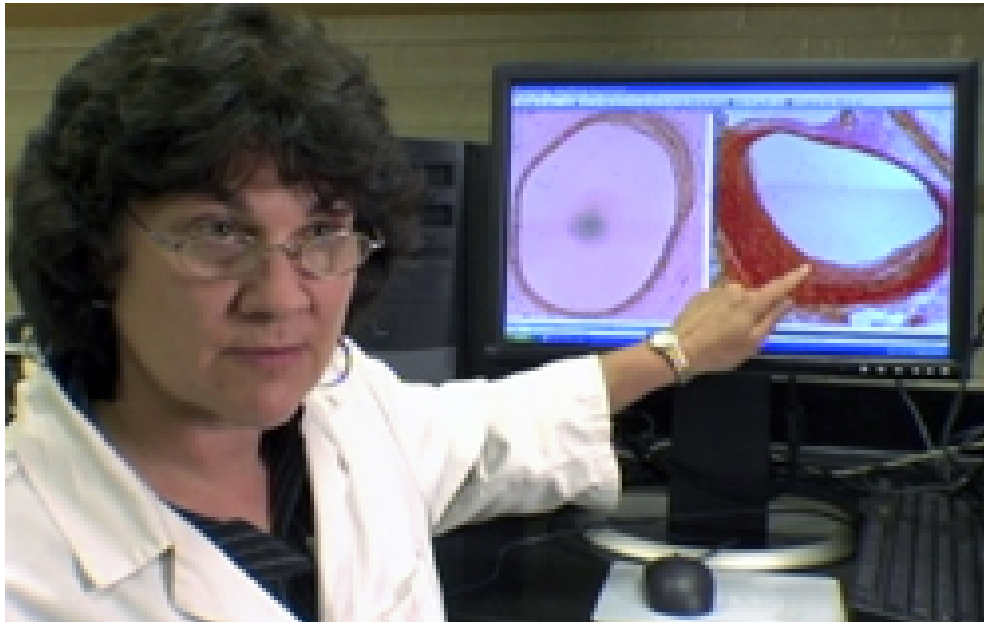
No parent was able to escape the shame of failing to provide for their children even when children were prepared to stop asking for things – the latter itself being a further source of shame.

...For men, relying on others or on welfare benefits was perceived as a challenge to their sense of masculinity; a British father to two children admitted that he felt 'like shit ... I'm the man in this relationship. I am meant to be the man ... to take care of the missus and my kids. And I don't.'

Social hierarchy in non-human primates

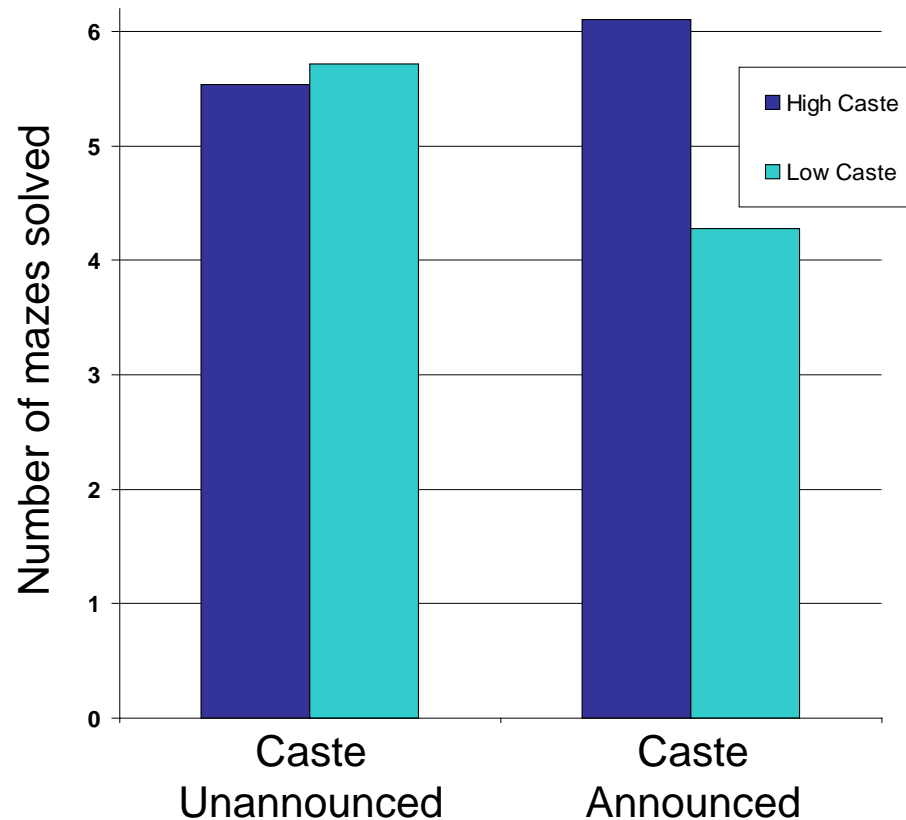
**Robert Sapolsky studies
baboons in the wild**

**Carol Shively studies
macaques in captivity**

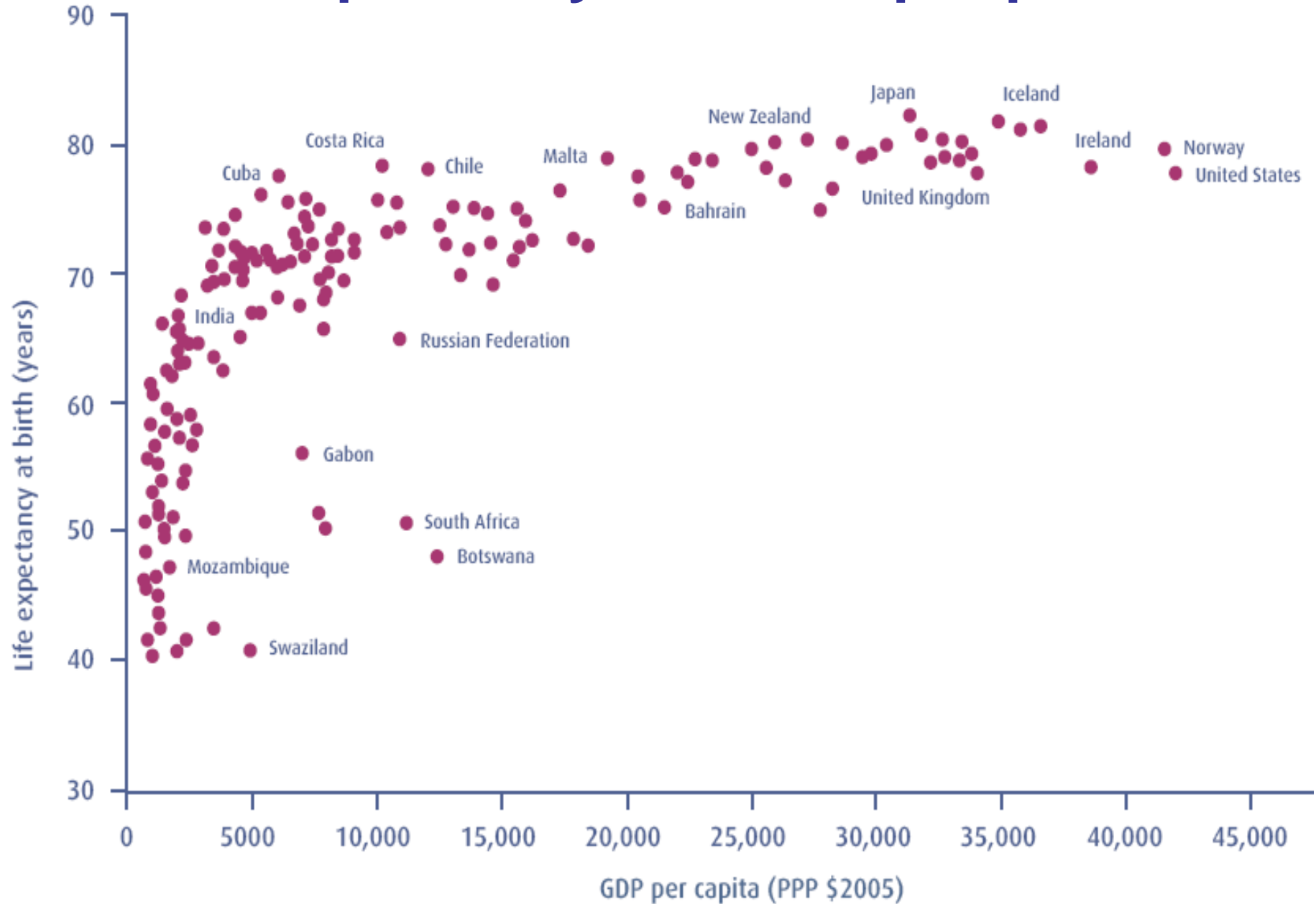


Status differentiation has a direct effect on cognitive performance

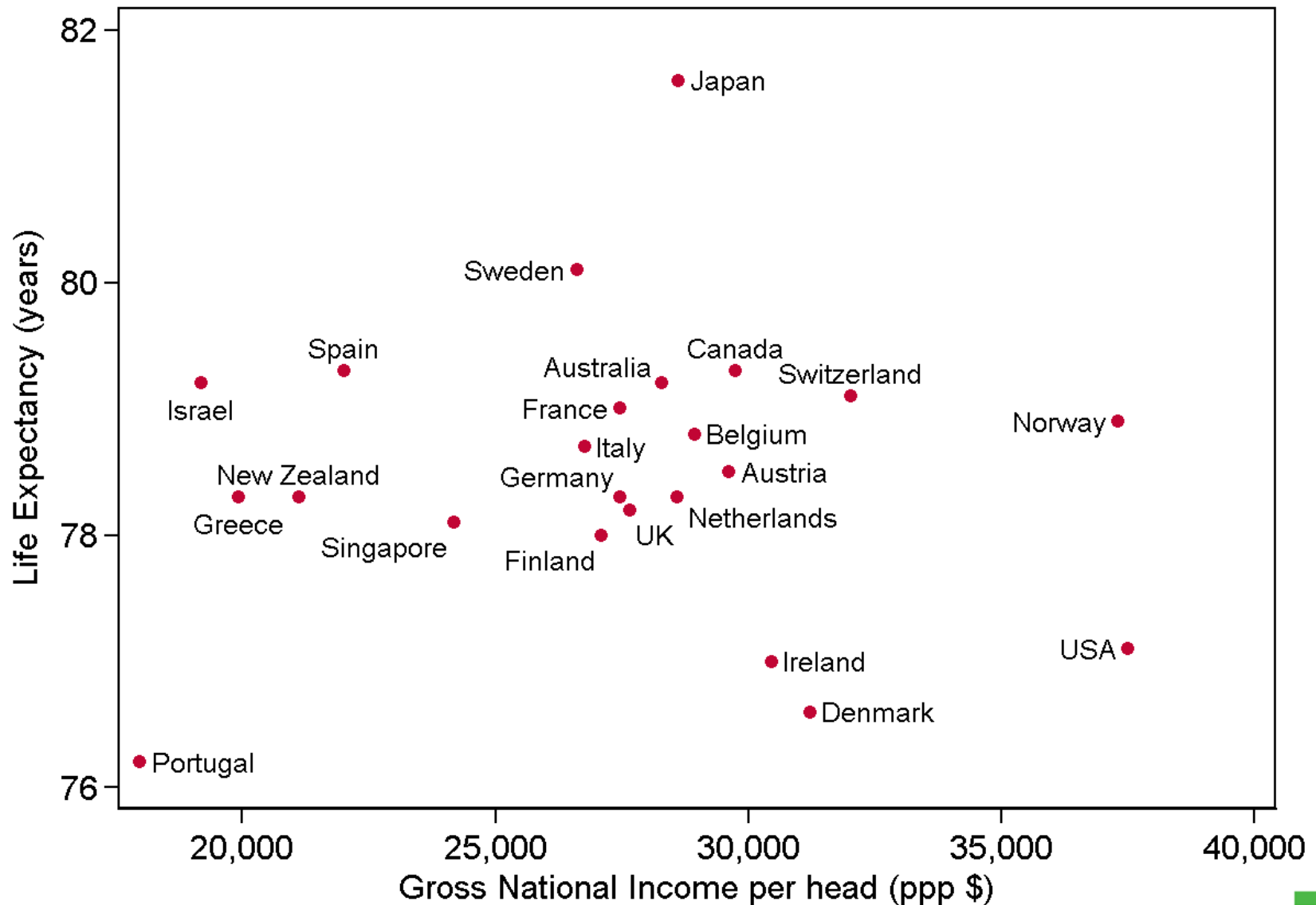
The Effect of Caste Identity on Children's Performance



Life expectancy and GDP per person

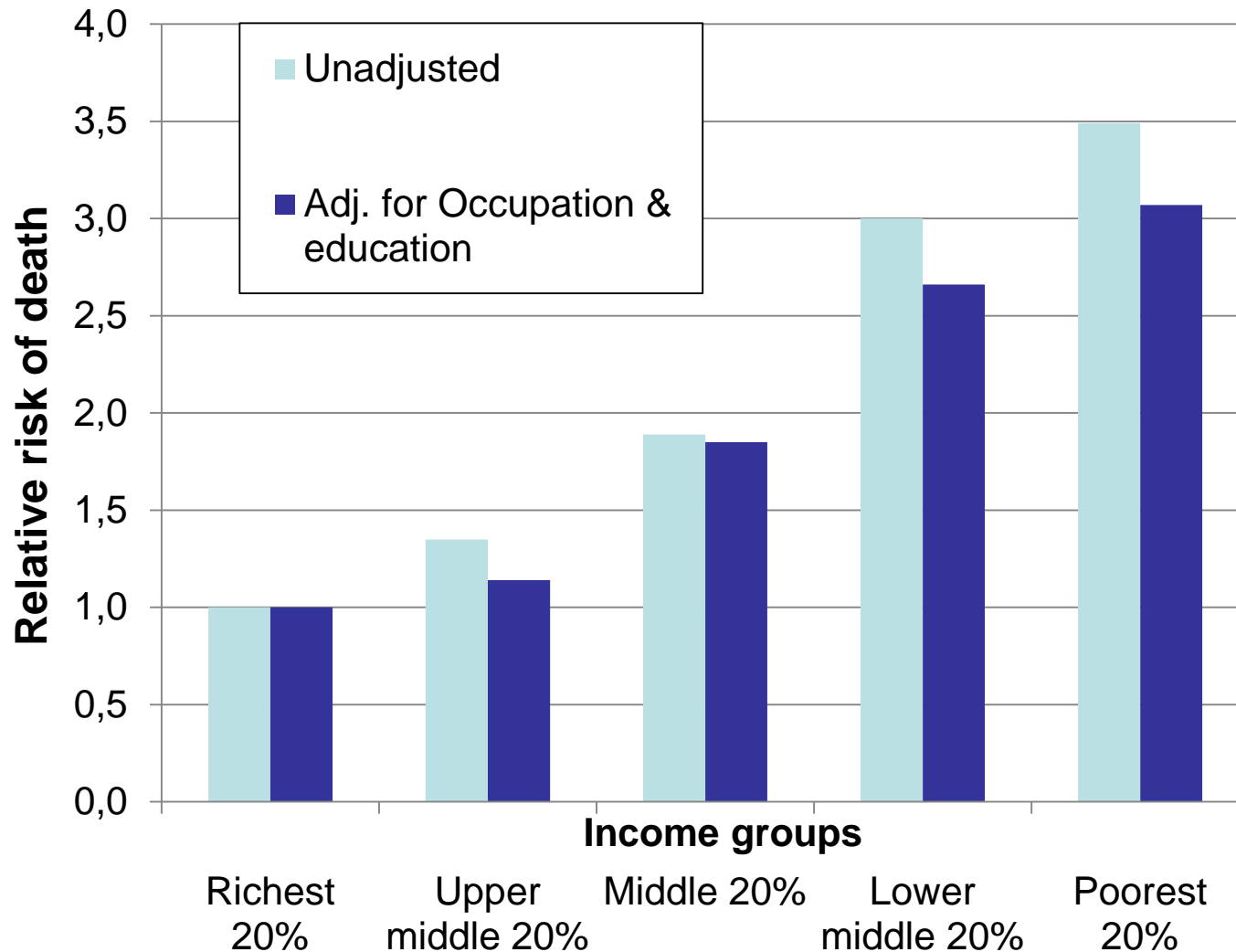


Life expectancy in rich countries is no longer related to National Income per head

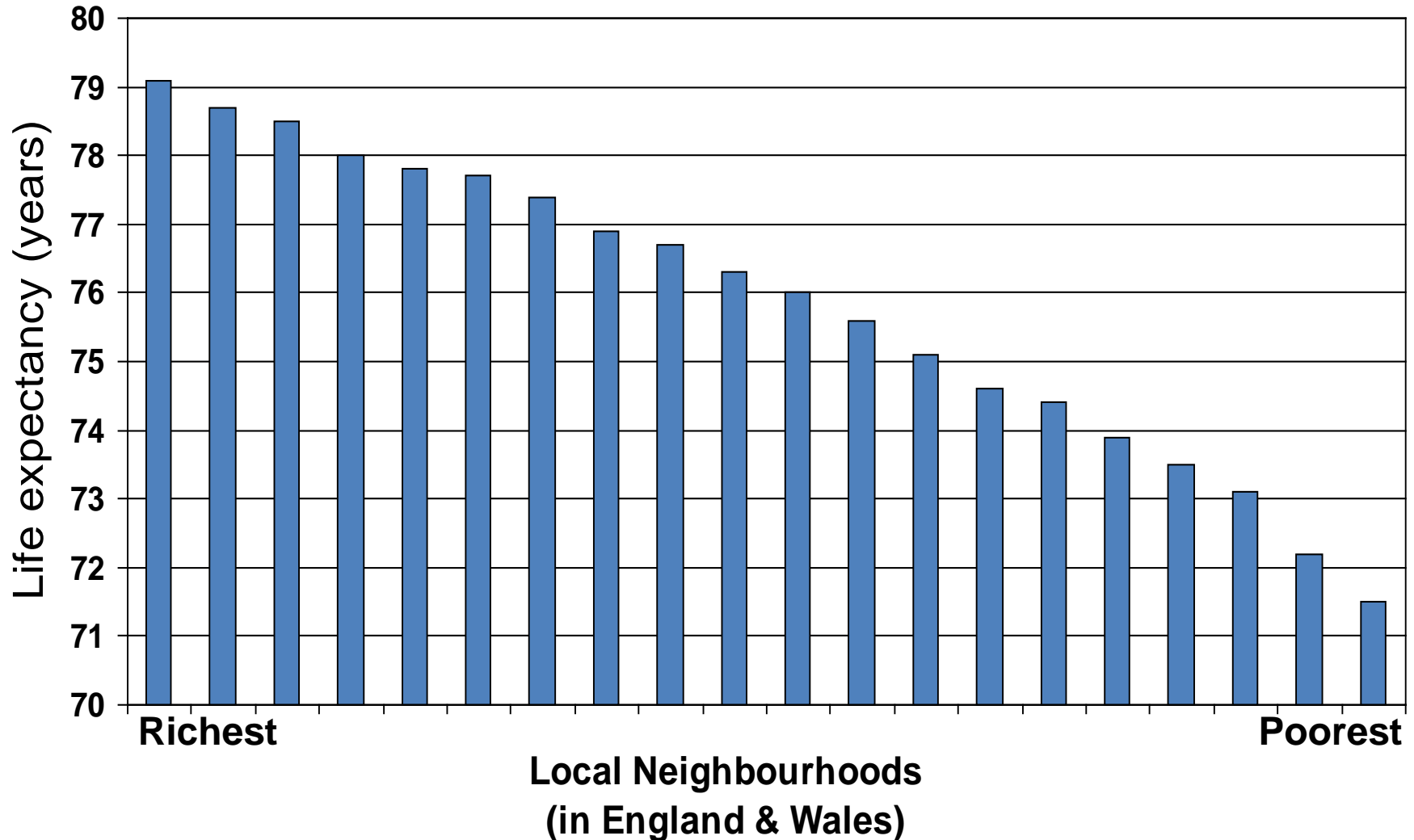


Relative risk of death by income group Men and women aged 25-65

Insured population of Mettmann, Nordrhein-Westfalen (2473 deaths)

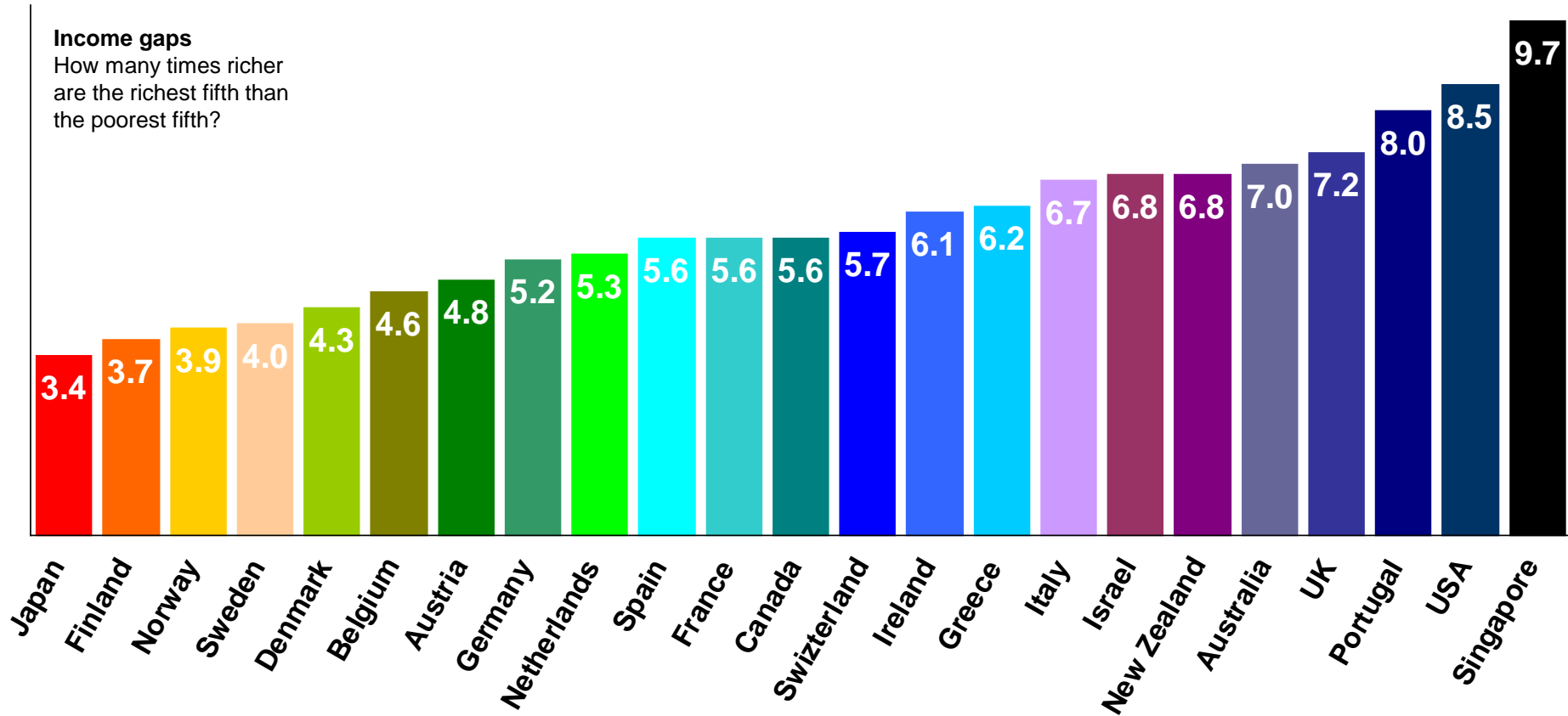


Life expectancy is strongly related to income within rich countries



Inequality...

How much richer are the richest 20% in each country than the poorest 20%?



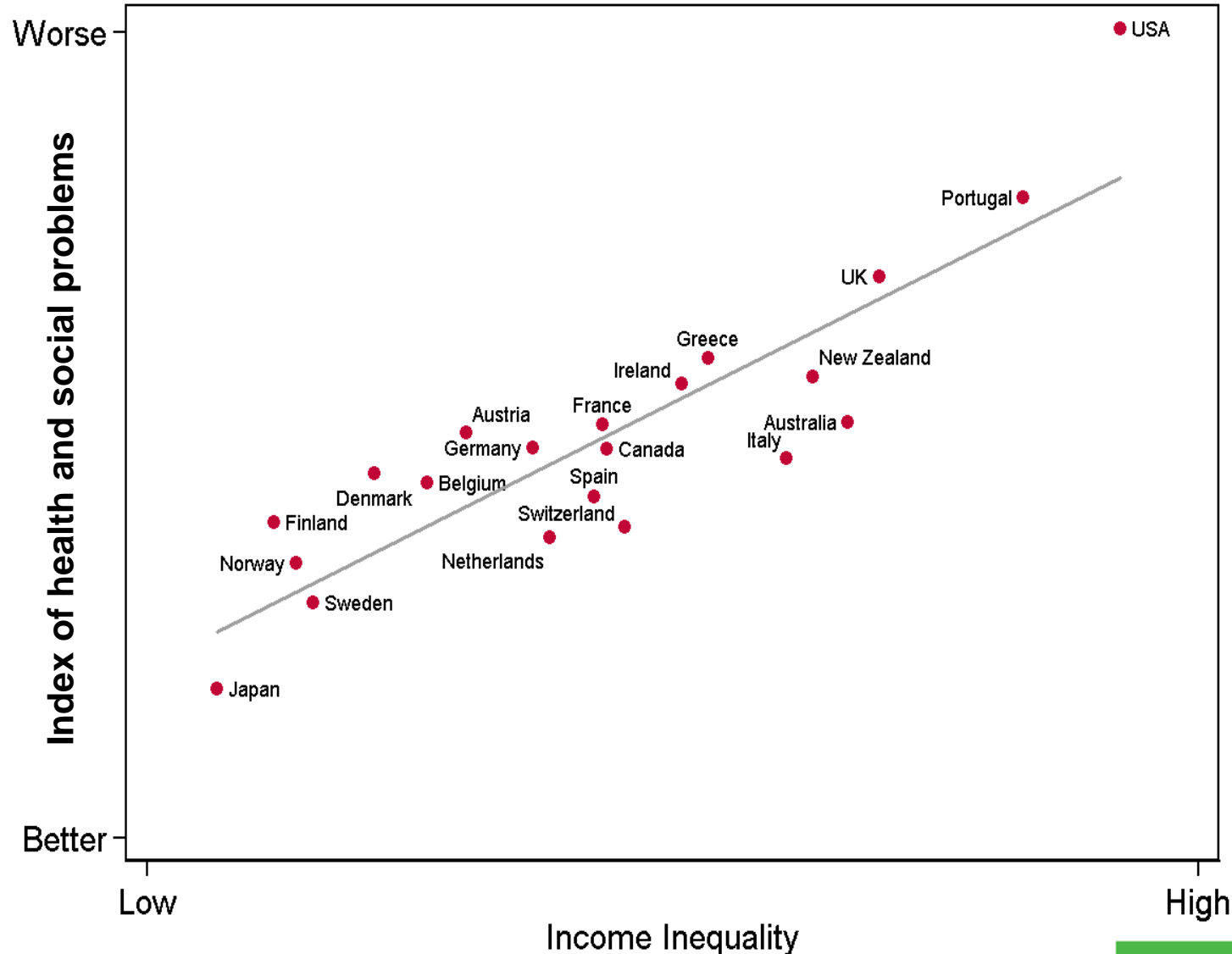
Health and social problems with social gradients and internationally comparable data

- **Life expectancy**
- **Math & Literacy**
- **Infant mortality**
- **Homicides**
- **Imprisonment**
- **Teenage births**
- **Trust**
- **Obesity**
- **Mental illness – incl. drug & alcohol addiction**
- **Social mobility**

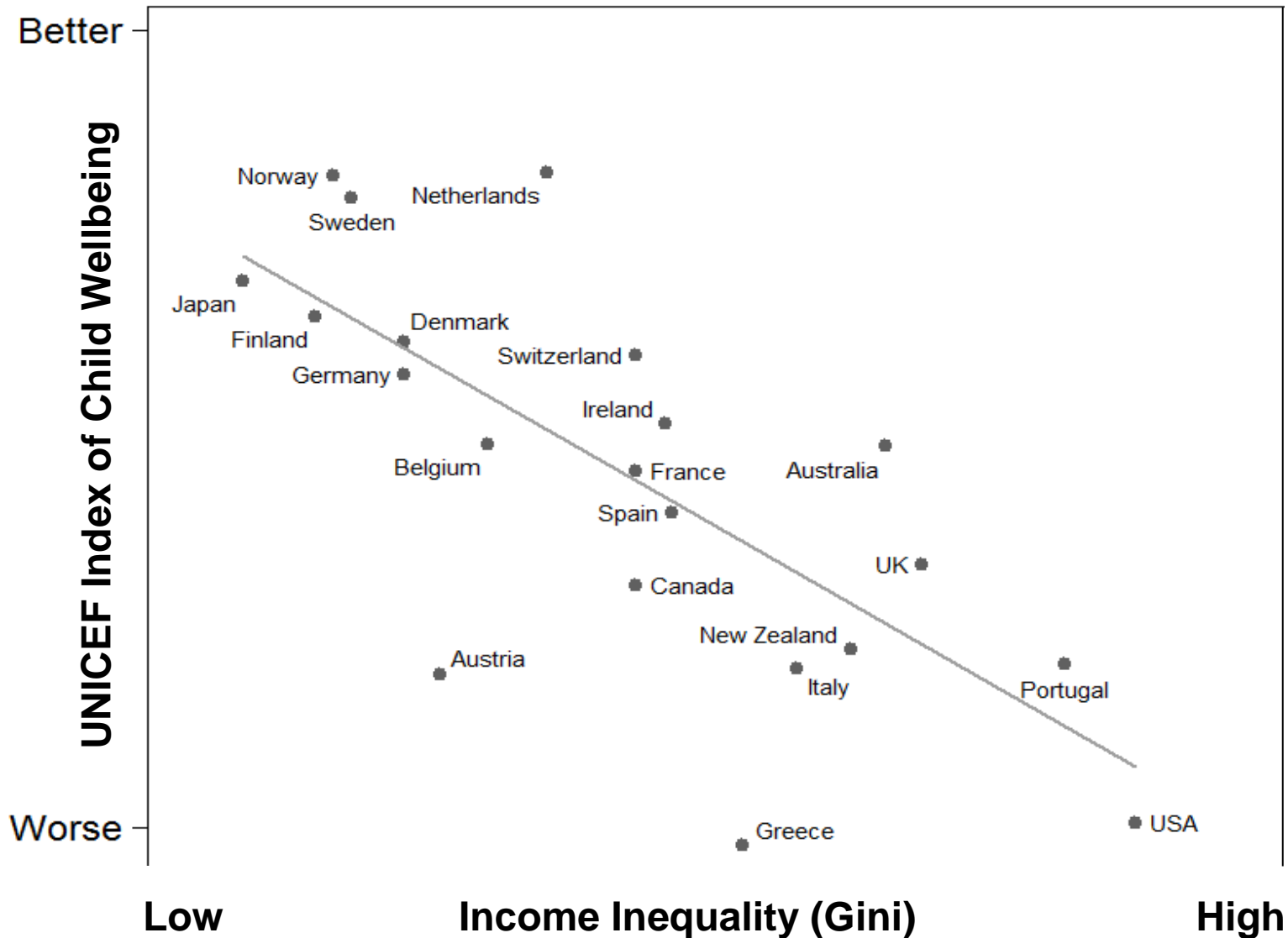
Health and social problems are worse in more unequal countries

Index of:

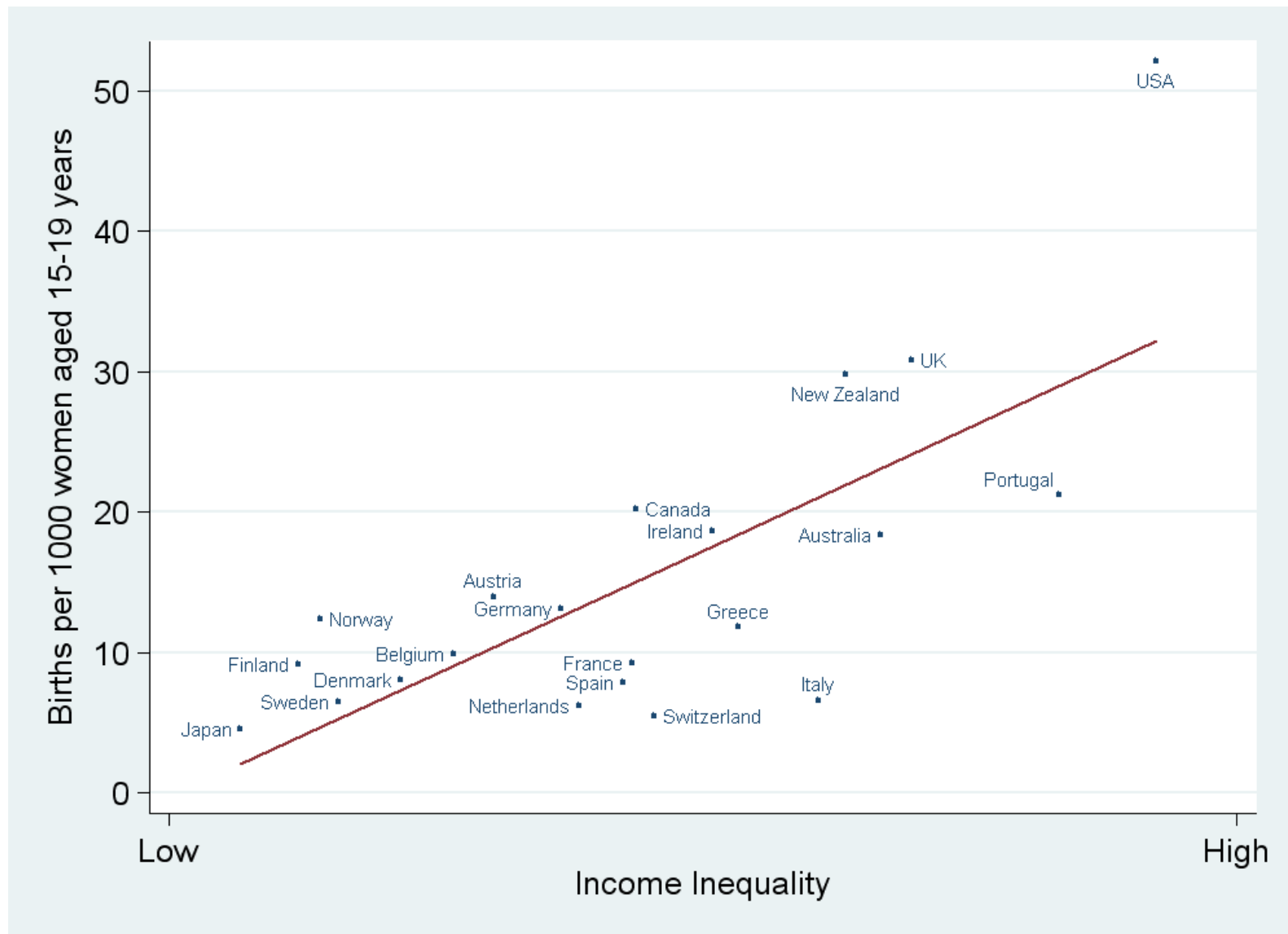
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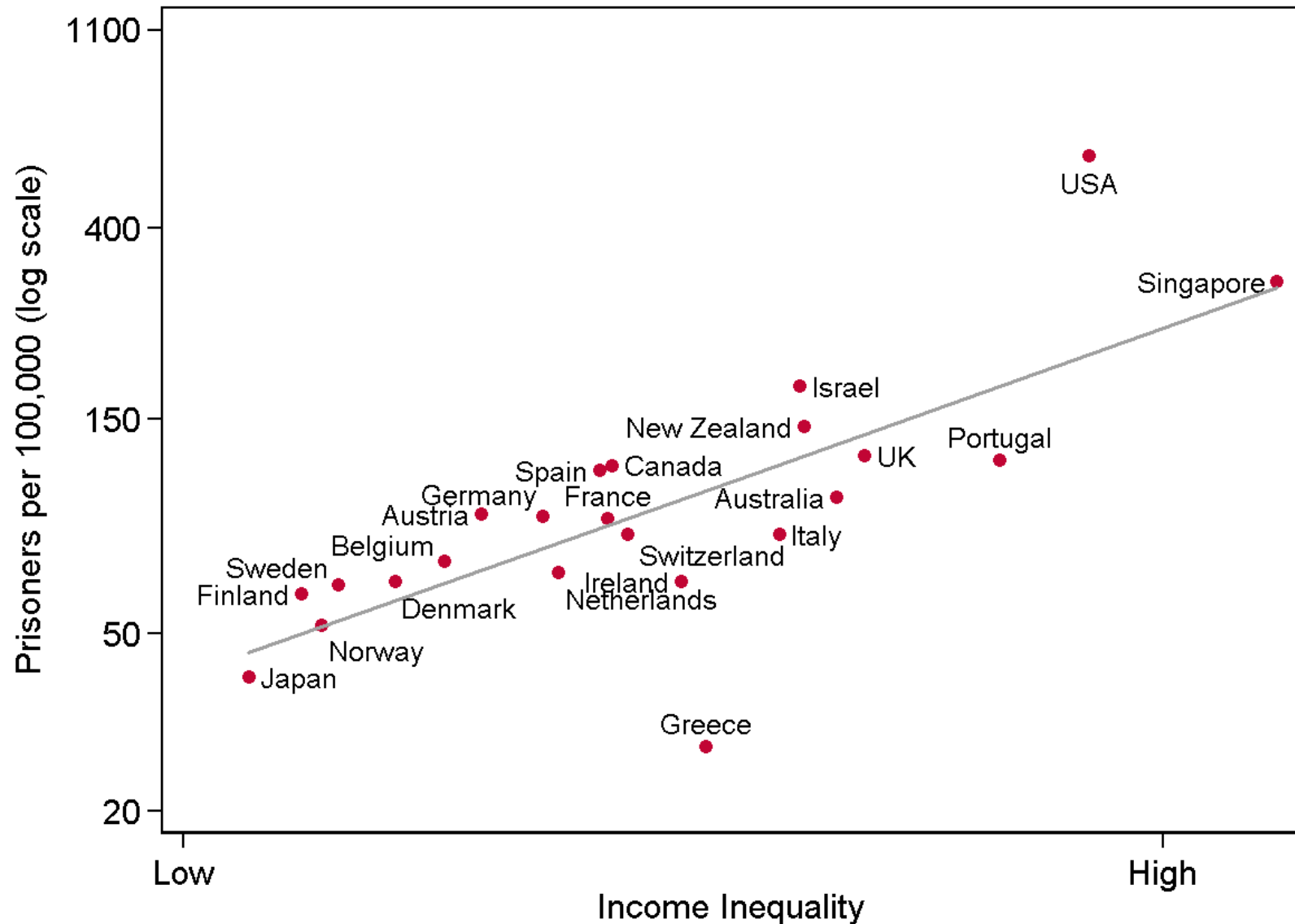
Child Wellbeing is lower in more unequal countries



Teenage Birth Rates are Higher in More Unequal Rich Countries



Imprisonment rates are higher in more unequal countries



Mental illness is more common in more unequal societies



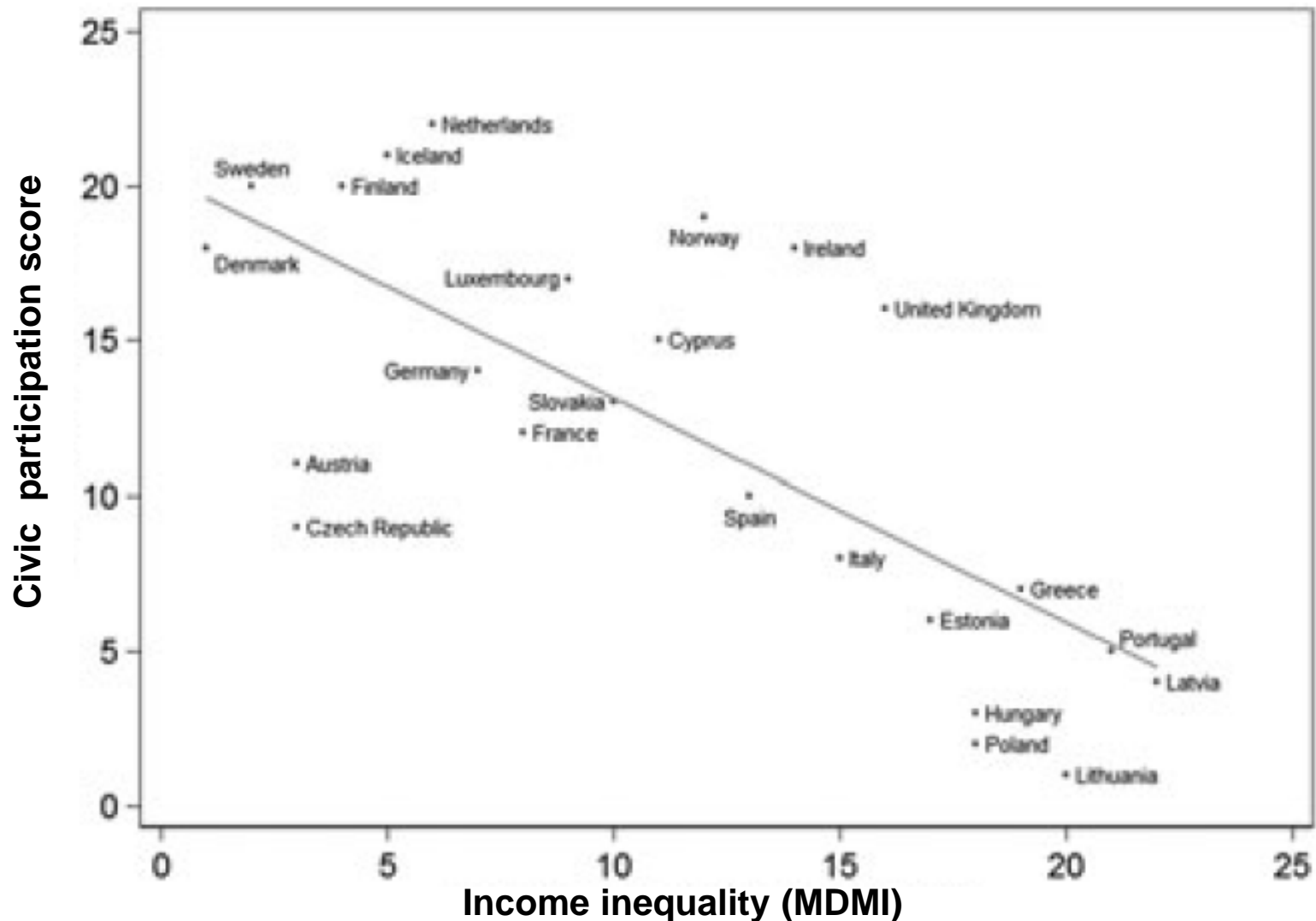
The Relationship between Income Inequality and Social Mobility

Around the world, high income inequality is associated with low social mobility.



Data from Corak (2013), World Bank (2013)

Participation in local groups and voluntary organisations is lower in more unequal societies.

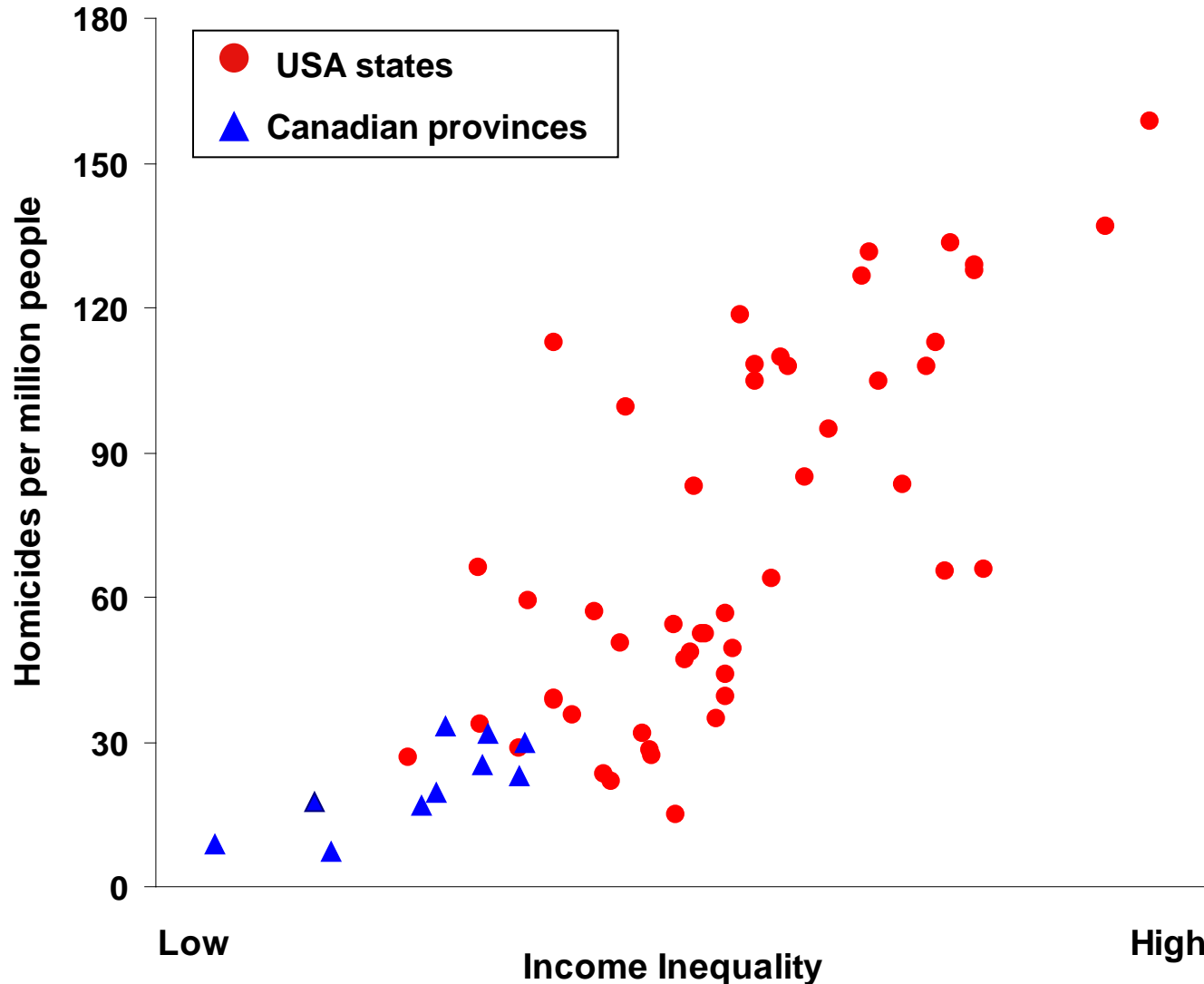


Lancee B, Van de Werfhorst HG. Income inequality and participation: A comparison of 24 European countries. *Social Science Research*. 2012; 41(5):1166-78.

People in more unequal countries trust each other less



Homicide rates are higher in more unequal US states and Canadian provinces



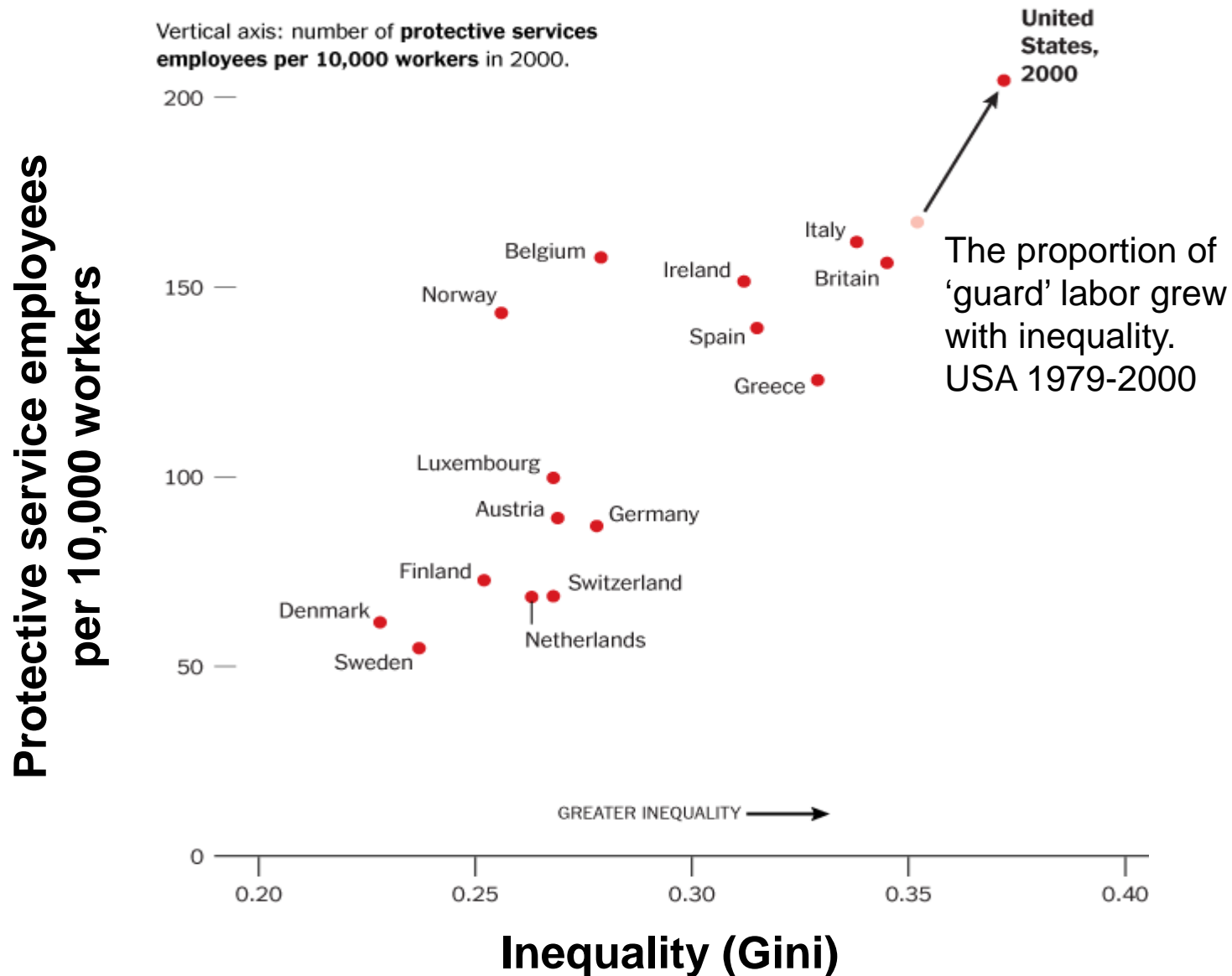
Cuernavaca, Mexico



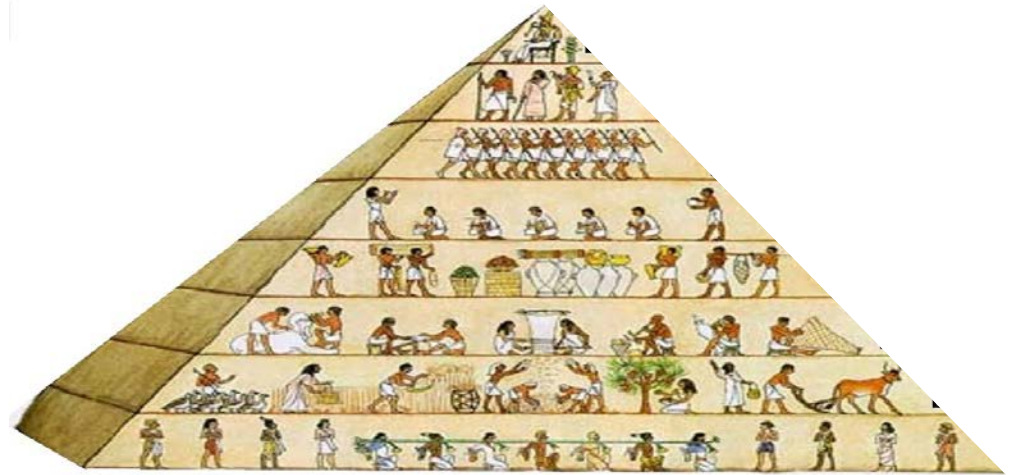
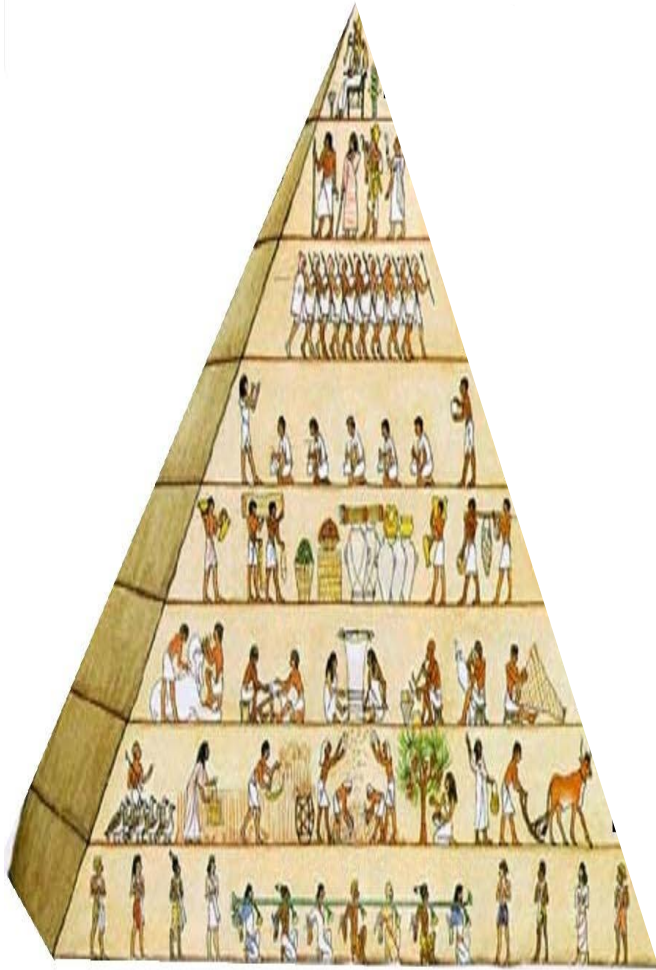
'Armed Response' - Pretoria, South Africa.



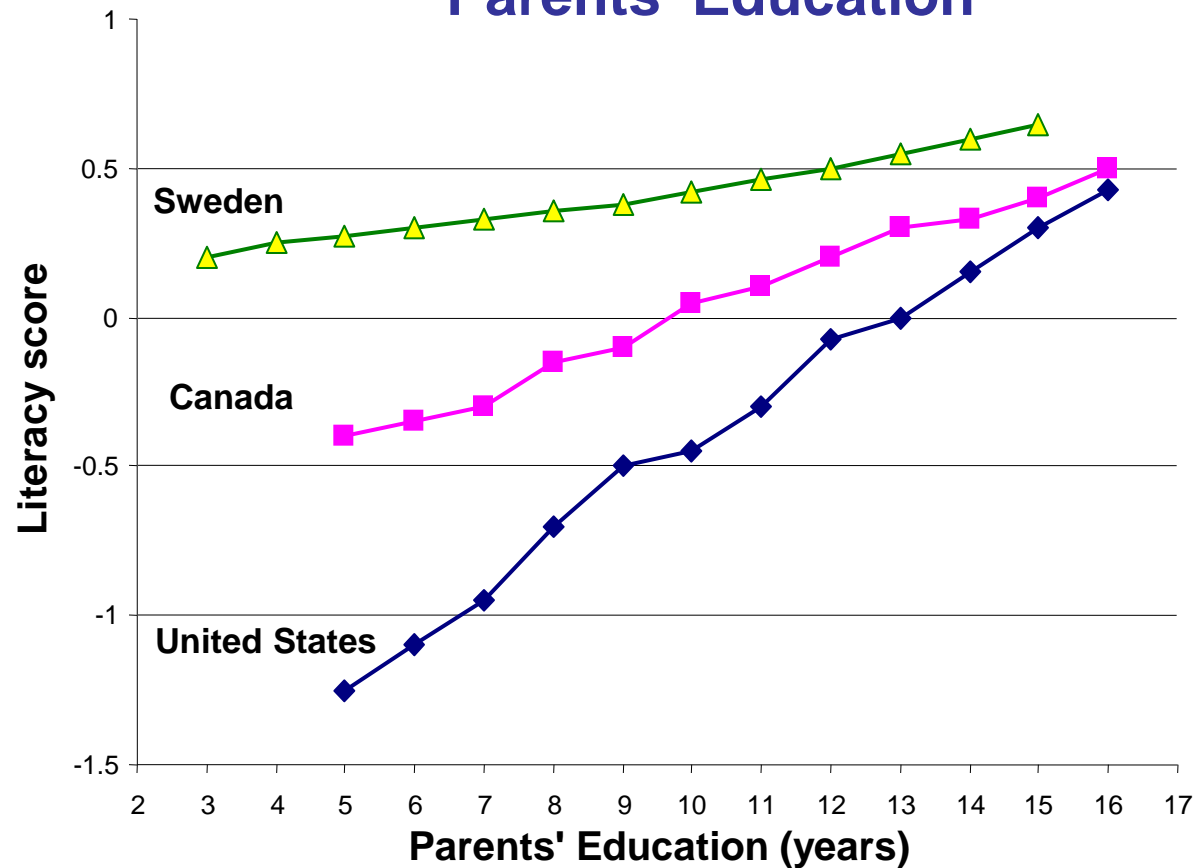
Societies with wider Income differences need more “guard labor”



Bigger material differences create bigger social distances and increase social class differentiation



Literacy Scores of 16-25 year olds by Parents' Education

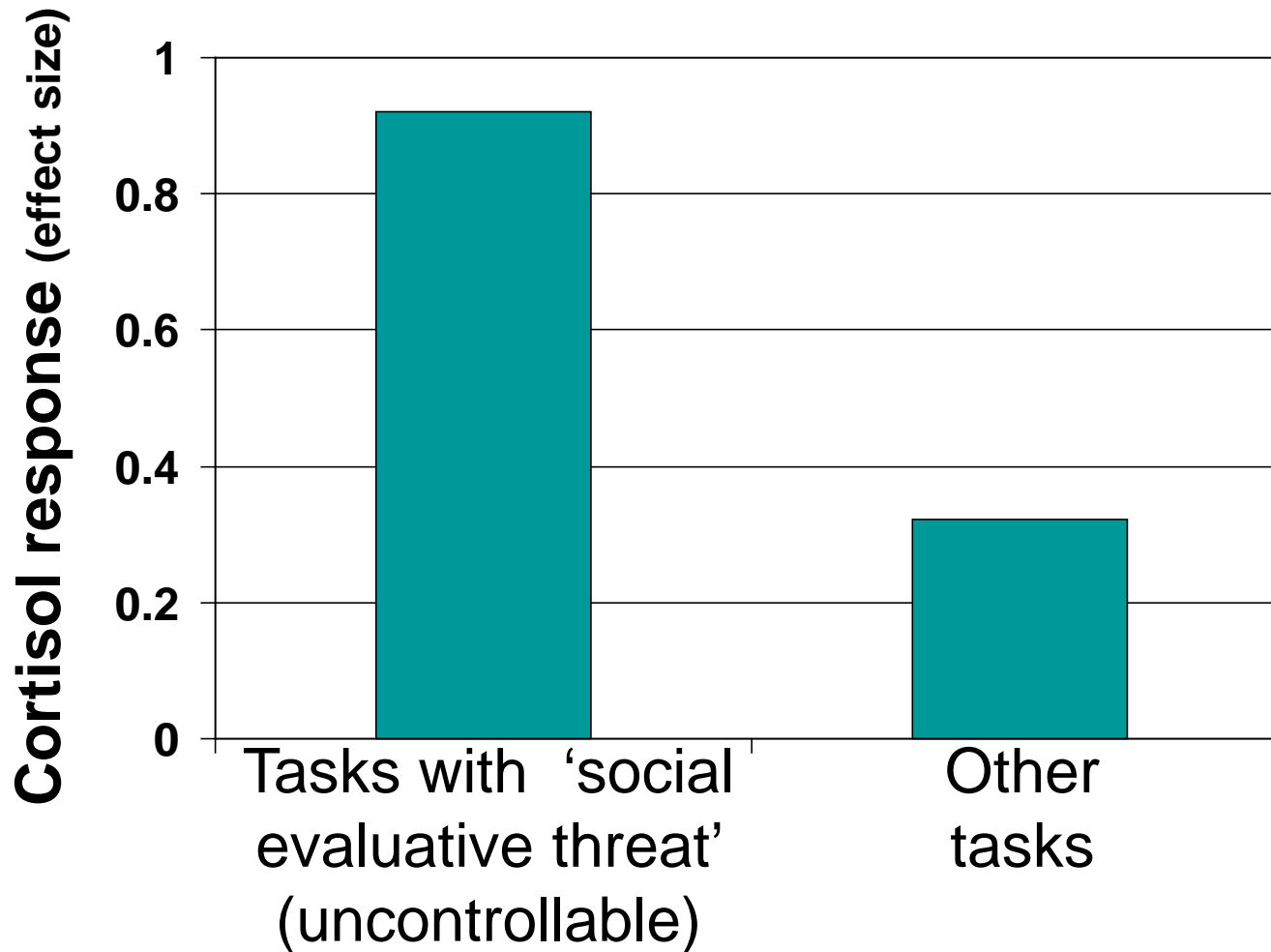




Psychosocial risk factors for ill health

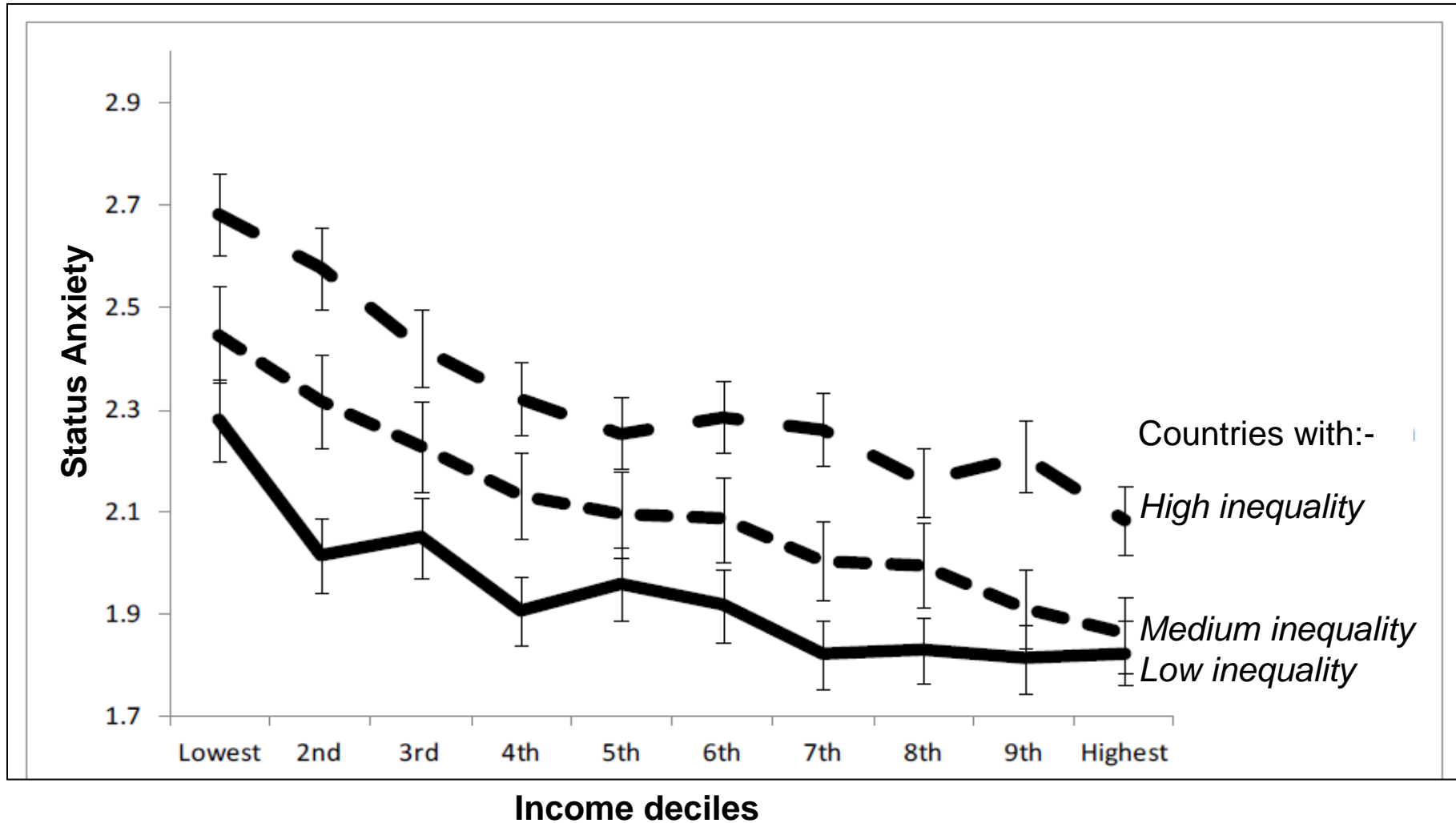
- **Low social status**
- **Weak social connections**
- **Stress in early life (pre- & post-natal)**

What kind of stress cause the biggest rises in stress hormones?



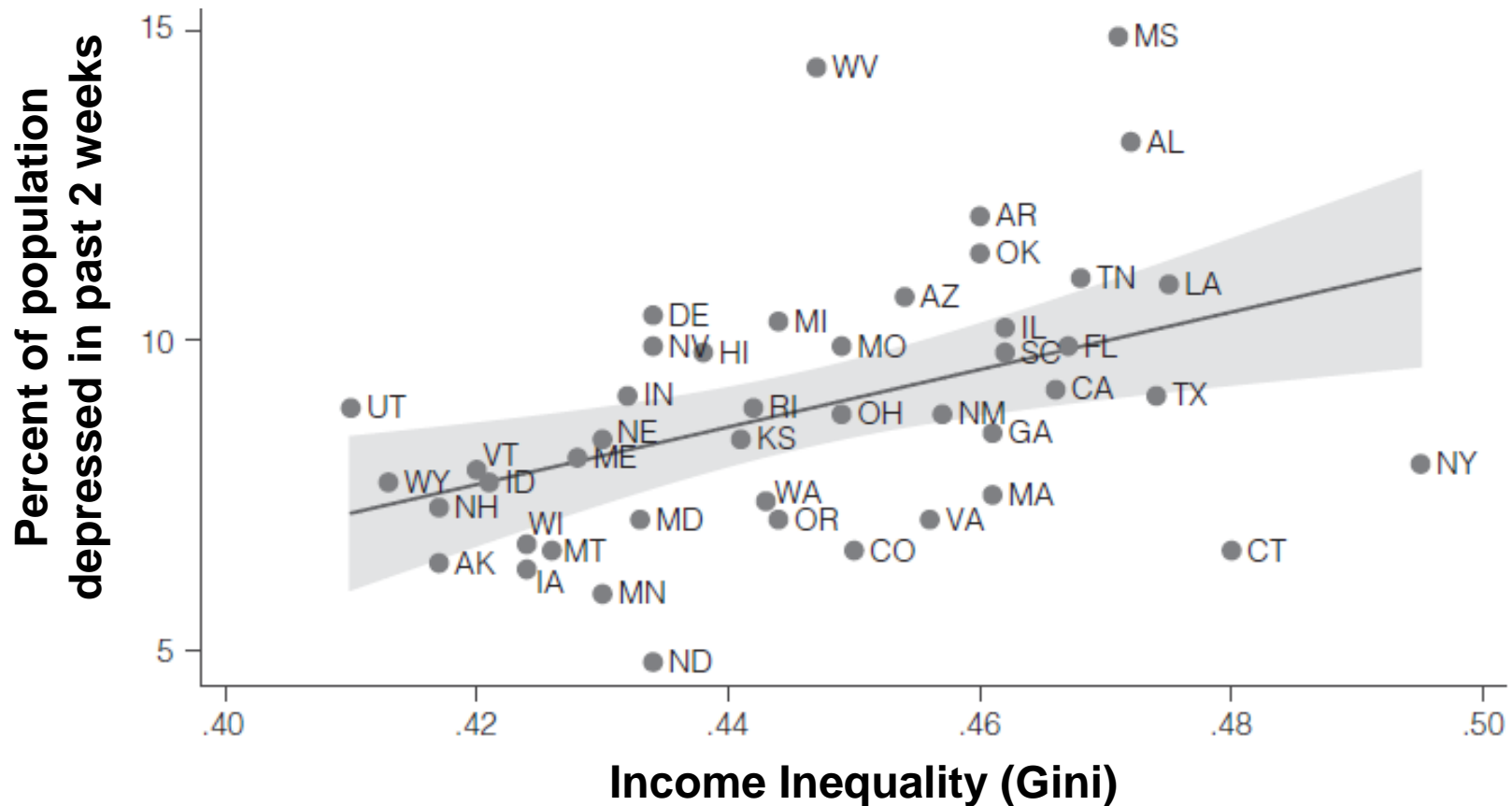
Dickerson SS, Kemeny ME. Acute stressors and cortisol responses. *Psychological Bulletin* 2004; 130(3): 355-91.

Status Anxiety across income deciles for high, medium and low inequality countries



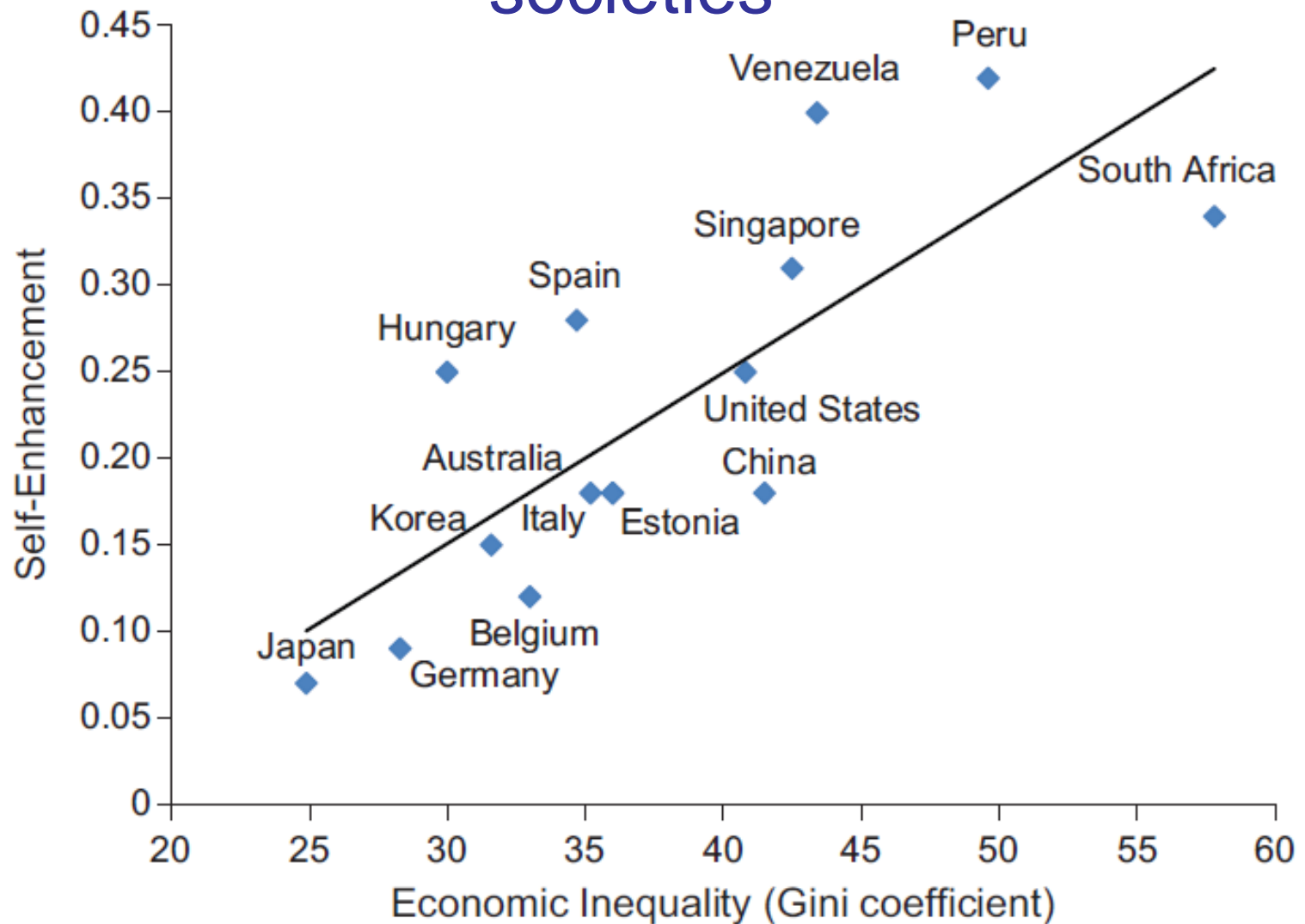
Layte R, Whelan CT. Who Feels Inferior? A Test of the Status Anxiety Hypothesis of Social Inequalities in Health. *European Sociological Review*, 2014.

Depression is more common in more unequal states



Messias E, Eaton WW, et al. . Economic grand rounds: Income inequality and depression across the United States: an ecological study." Psychiatric Services, 2011; 62(7): 710-2.

Self enhancement increases in more unequal societies

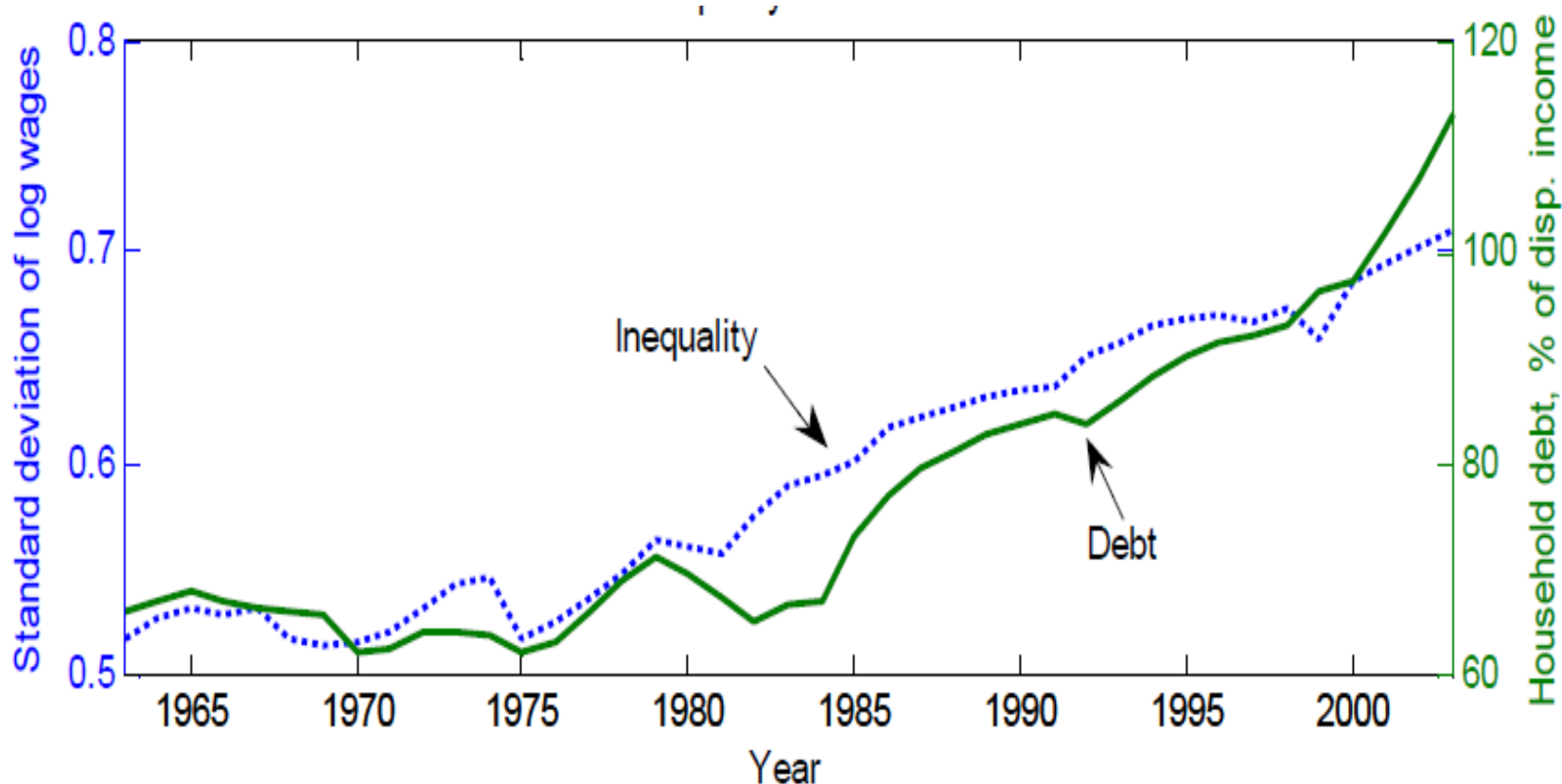


**Loughnan S, et al. Economic Inequality is linked to biased self-perception.
Psychological Science, 2011; 22: 1254**

Inequality increases conspicuous consumption and consumerism

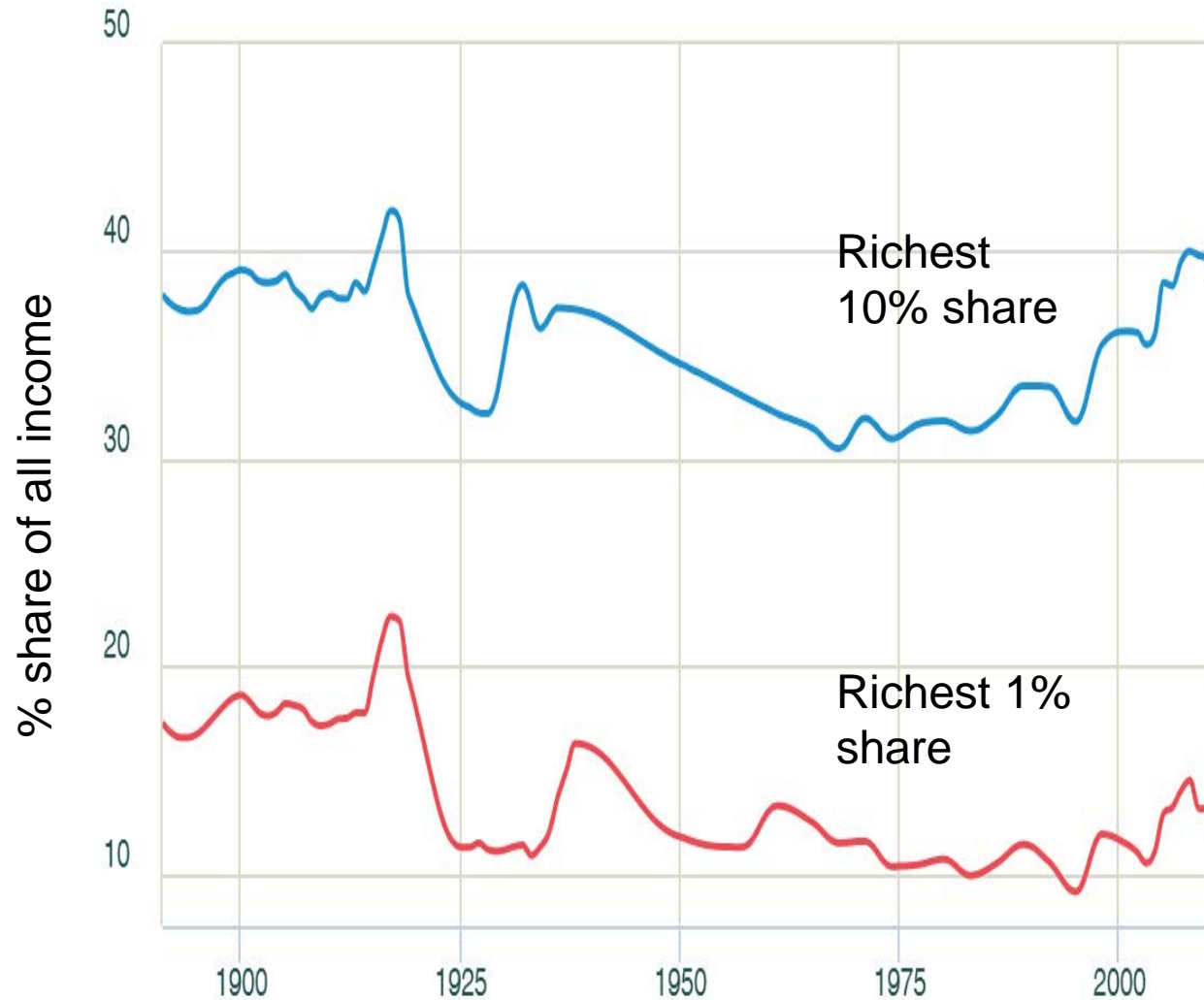
- **People in more unequal areas of the USA are more likely to buy high status cars**
- **Studies using Google searches have shown that people in more unequal US states and more unequal countries are more likely to search for status goods**

Household Debt and Income Inequality USA



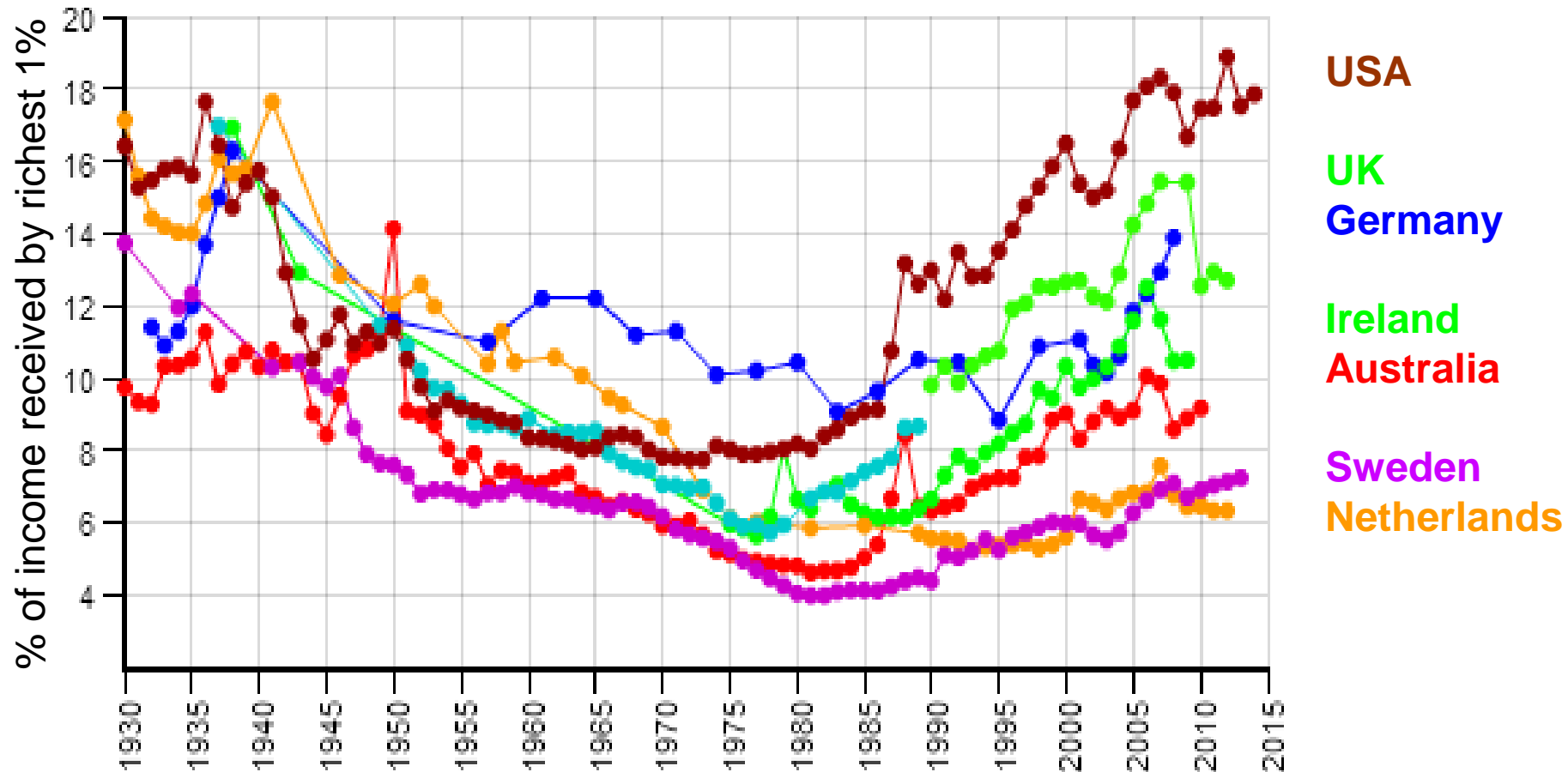
Iacoviello M. Household Debt and Income Inequality, 1963–2003. *Journal of Money, Credit and Banking* 2008;40(5):929-65.

Income Inequality: Germany 1891 - 2011



World Top Incomes Database

Percent of all income going to top 1% 1930-2014



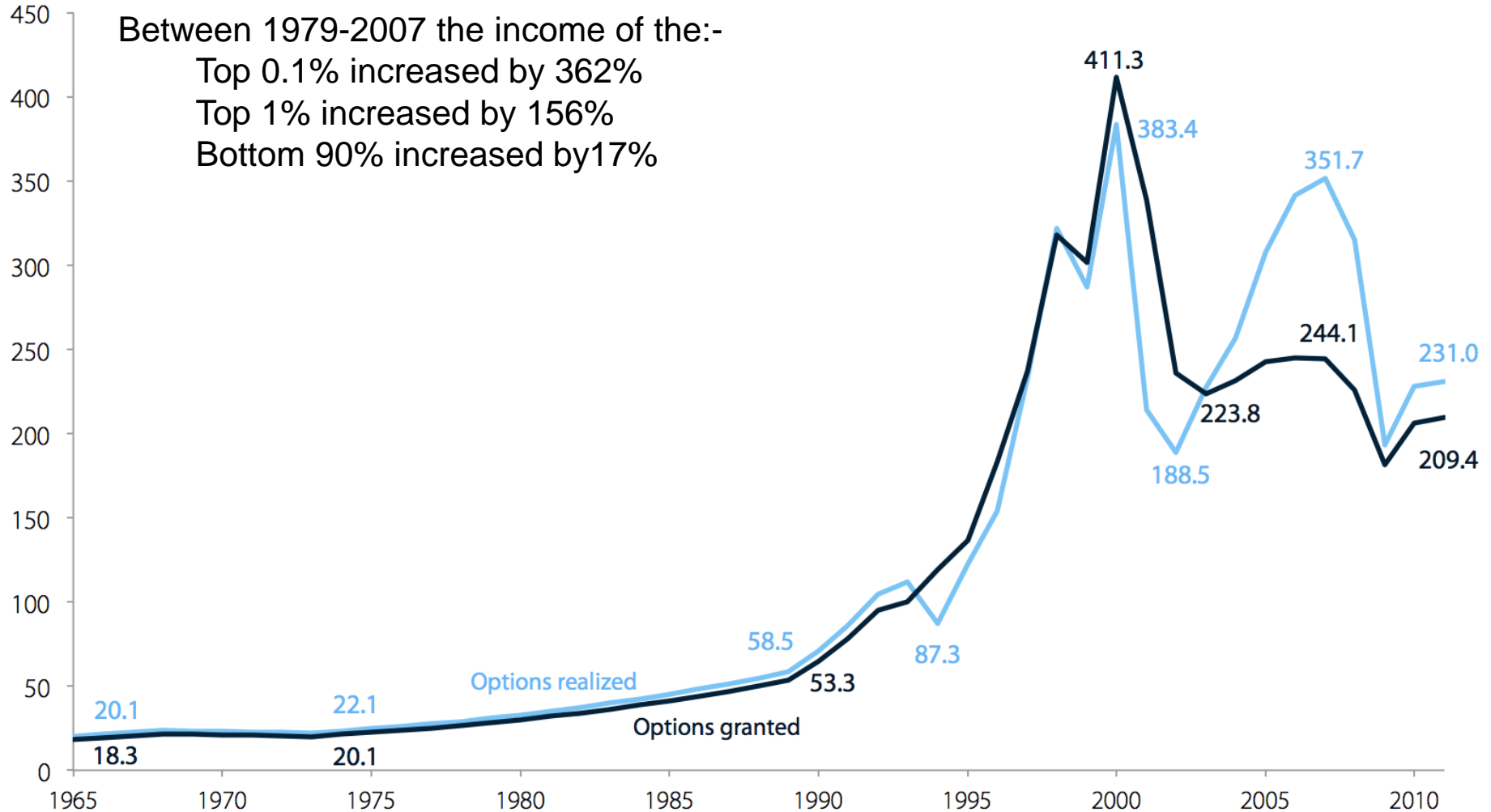
Source: World Top Incomes Database

Trade Unions membership (% workforce) and Share of Income going to top 10% (USA, 1918-2008)

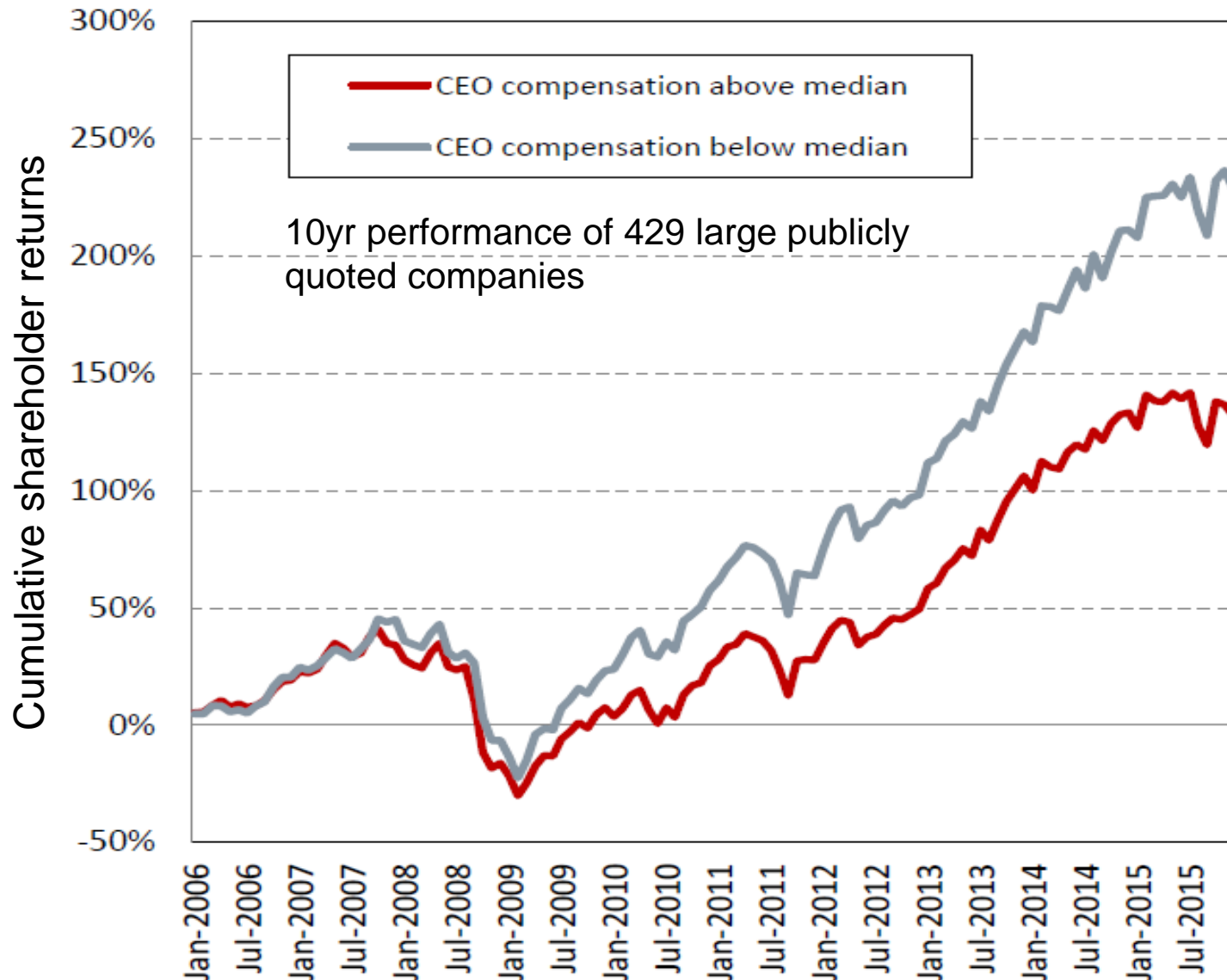


Colin Gordon's analysis of Historical Statistics for the US, unionstats.com, Piketty and Saez 2003, and World Top Incomes Database. Economic Policy Institute, Washington DC.

Changing ratio of CEO pay to average pay of production & non-supervisory workers in top 350 US companies



Companies paying CEOs above the median performed less well than those paying below the median



Economic democracy:-

- **“turns companies from being pieces of property into communities”**
- **reduces pay ratios within companies**
- **transforms the experience of work**
- **redistributes wealth & reduces unearned income**
- **improves productivity**
- **makes companies more environmentally & socially responsible**

Boards can include employee, community and consumer representatives

THAKEMITTE VERLAG, 80. ZWEITAUSCHENDESS

GLEICHHEIT IST GLÜCK

WARUM GERECHTE
GESELLSCHAFTEN
FÜR ALLE BESSER
SIND

RICHARD WILKINSON UND KATE PICKETT



For more information:
... a book
and a
website...

The **Equality Trust**

<http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk>