

Inequality: the enemy between us?

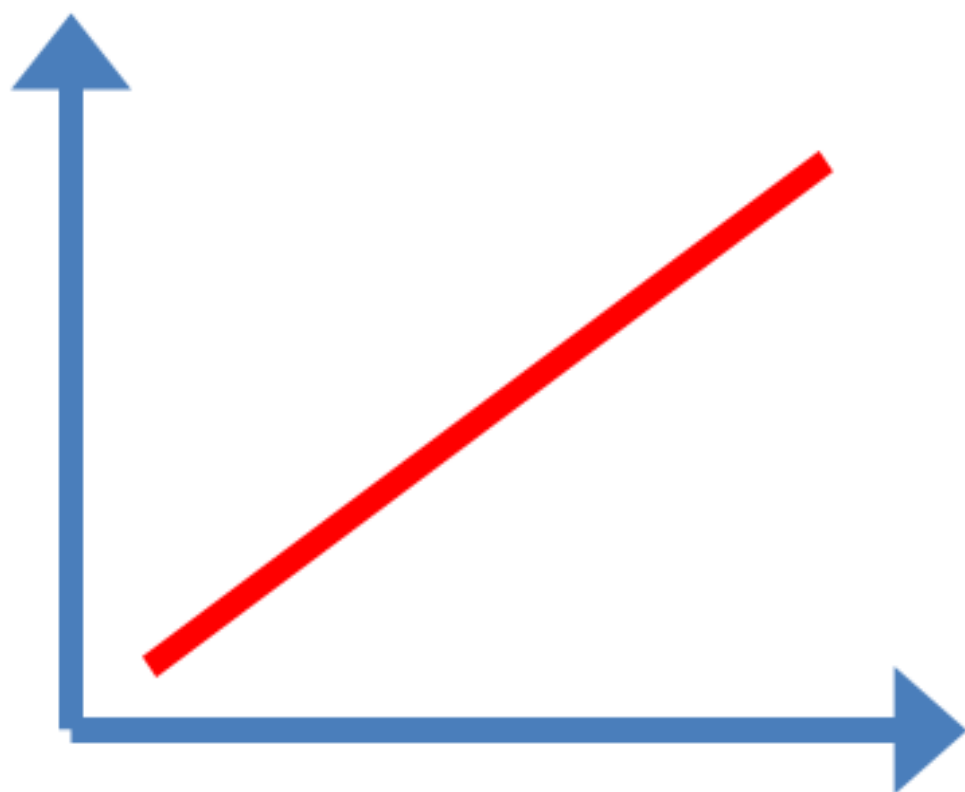
Richard Wilkinson

Emeritus Professor of Social Epidemiology



Photo by kind permission of Matt Stuart

Problems



**Income
inequality**

DECEMBER 9, 1995

\$1.95

TIME

SPIES SPY EVERYWHERE
The U.S. Roundup
Accelerates



Children Having Children

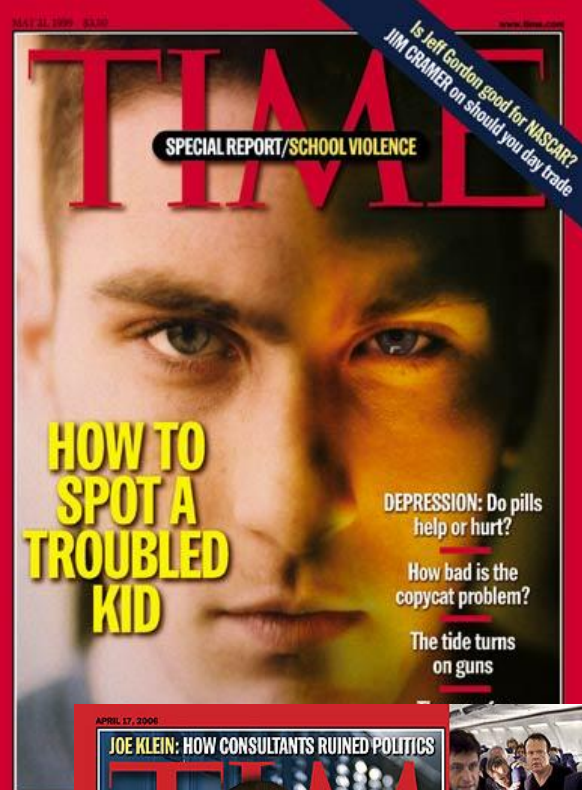
Teen Pregnancy
In America



SHATTERED LIVES

Portraits
From
America's
Drug War

by Mikki Norris
Chris Conrad &
Virginia Resner



SPECIAL REPORT/SCHOOL VIOLENCE

HOW TO SPOT A TROUBLED KID

DEPRESSION: Do pills
help or hurt?

How bad is the
copycat problem?

The tide turns
on guns

Is Jeff Gordon good for NASCAR?
JIM CRAMER on should you day trade

APRIL 17, 2001

JOE KLEIN: HOW CONSULTANTS RUINED POLITICS



FLIGHT 93:
THE MOVIE
EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

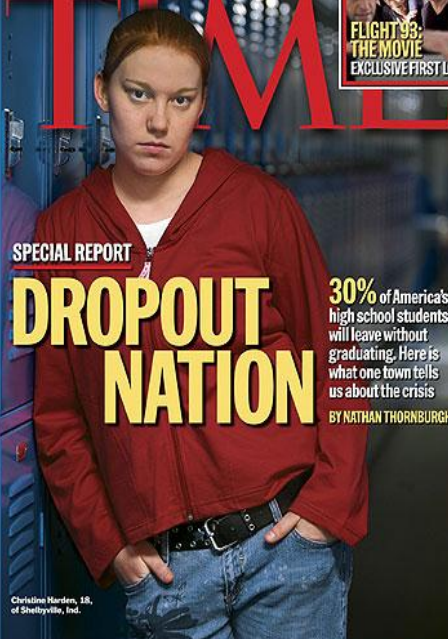
SPECIAL REPORT

DROPOUT NATION

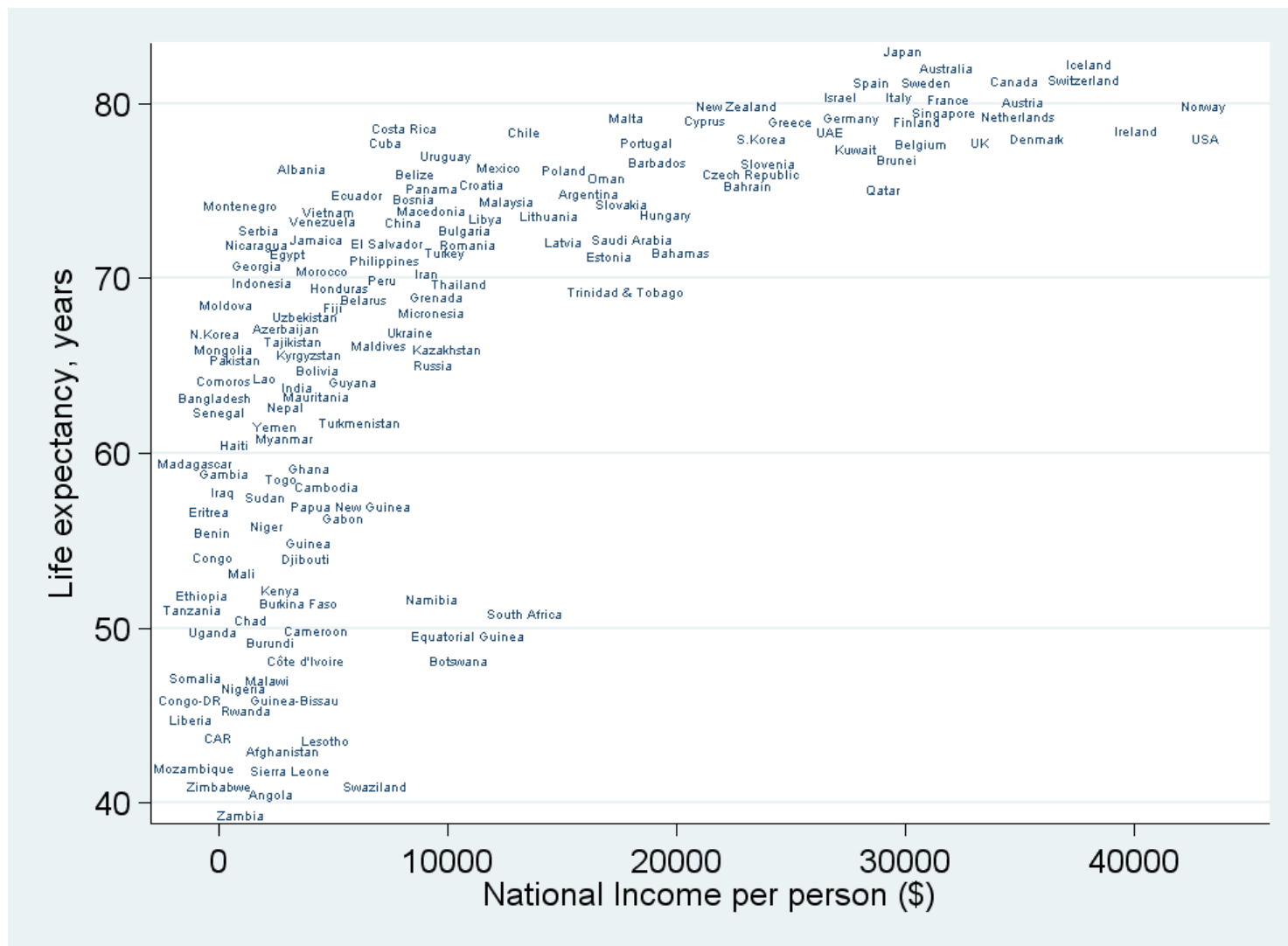
30% of America's
high school students
will leave without
graduating. Here is
what one town tells
us about the crisis

BY NATHAN THORNBURGH

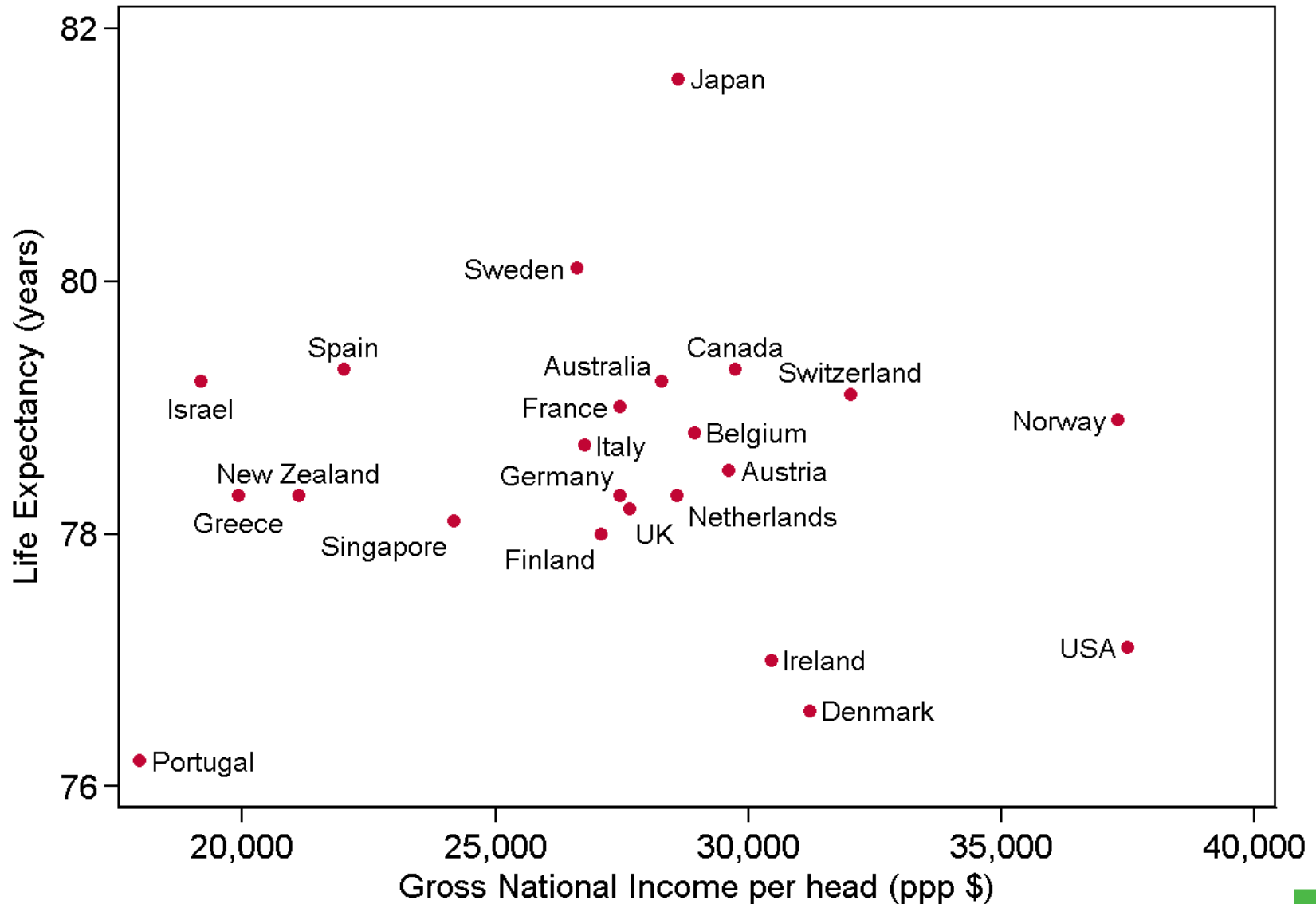
Christine Harden, 18,
of Shelbyville, Ind.



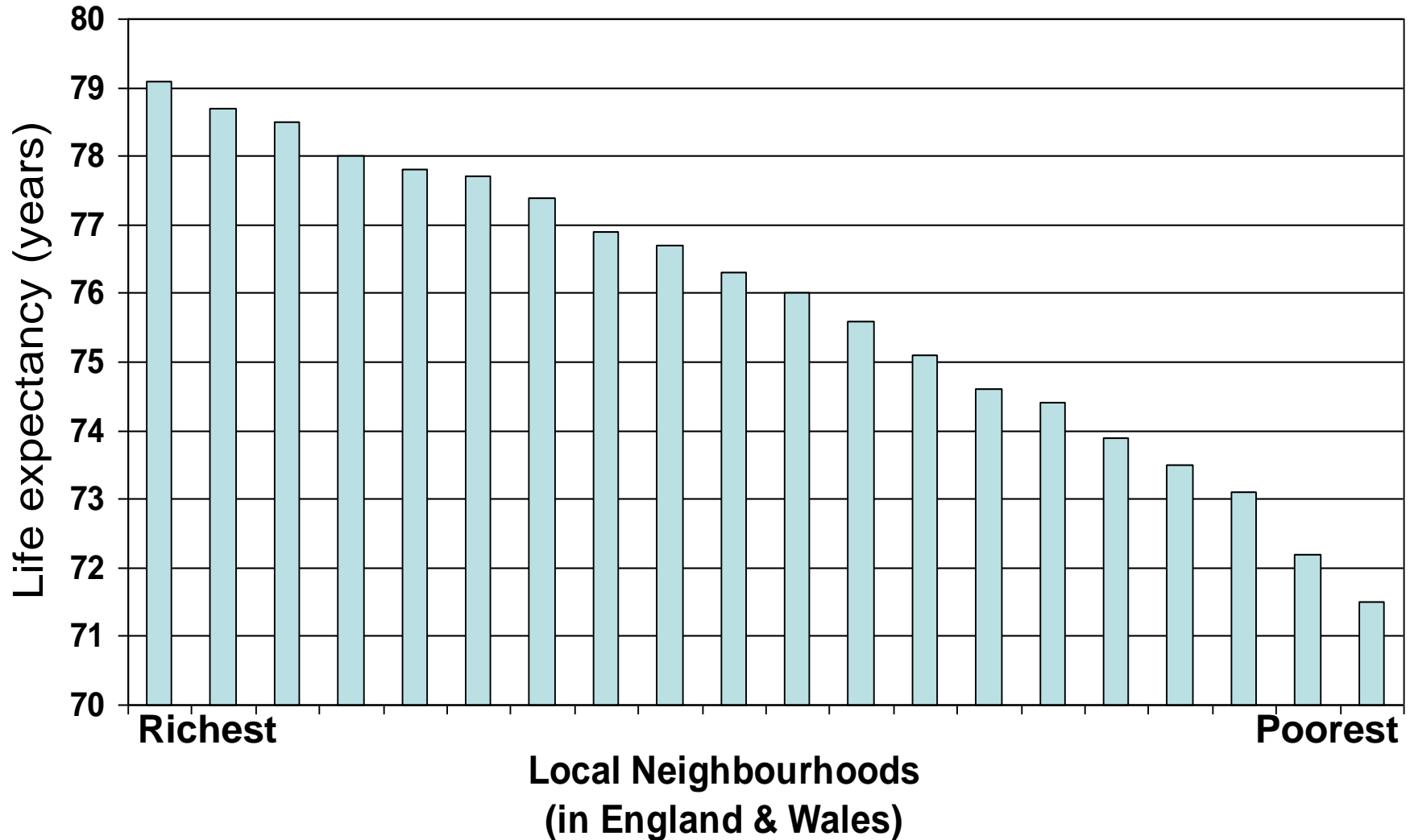
Income per head and life-expectancy: rich & poor countries



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

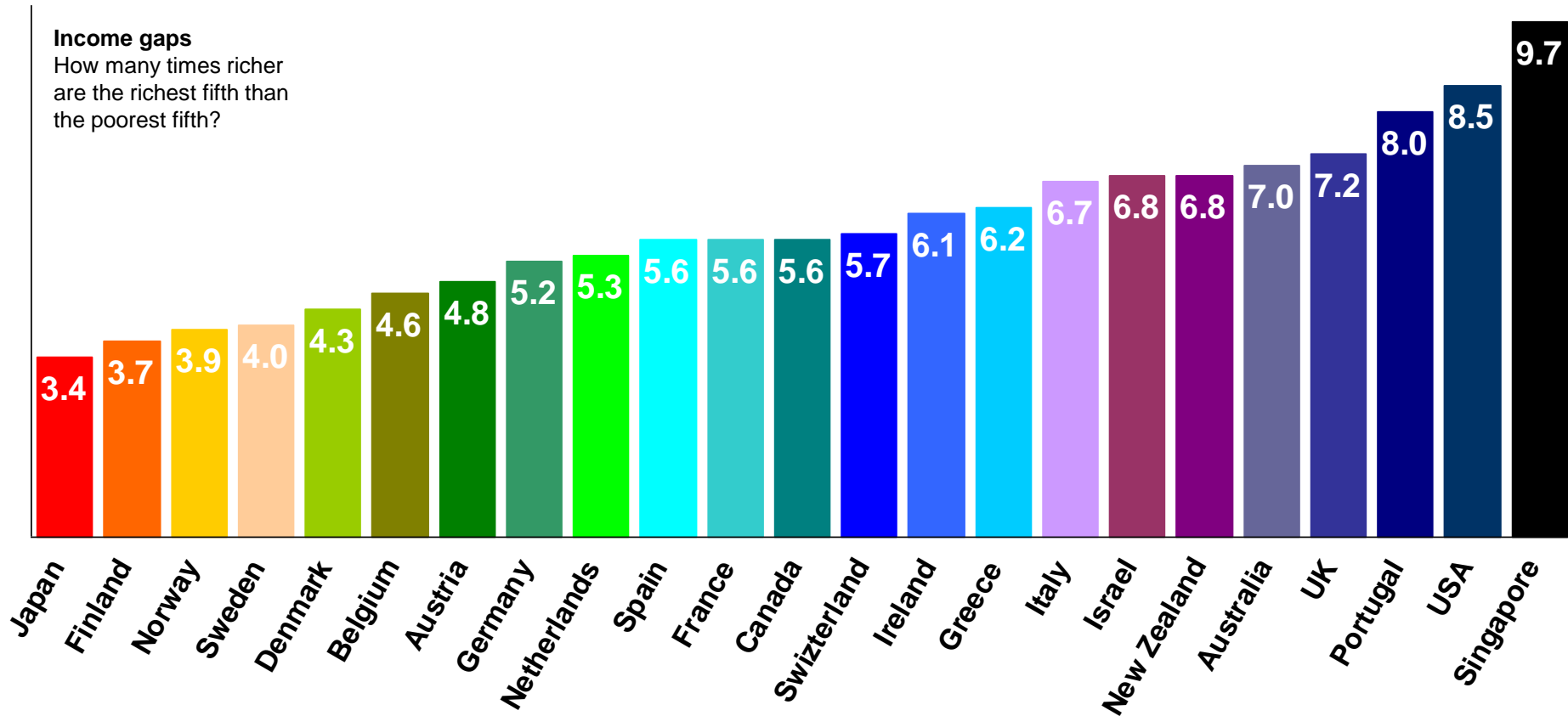


Life expectancy is strongly related to income within rich countries



Inequality...

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



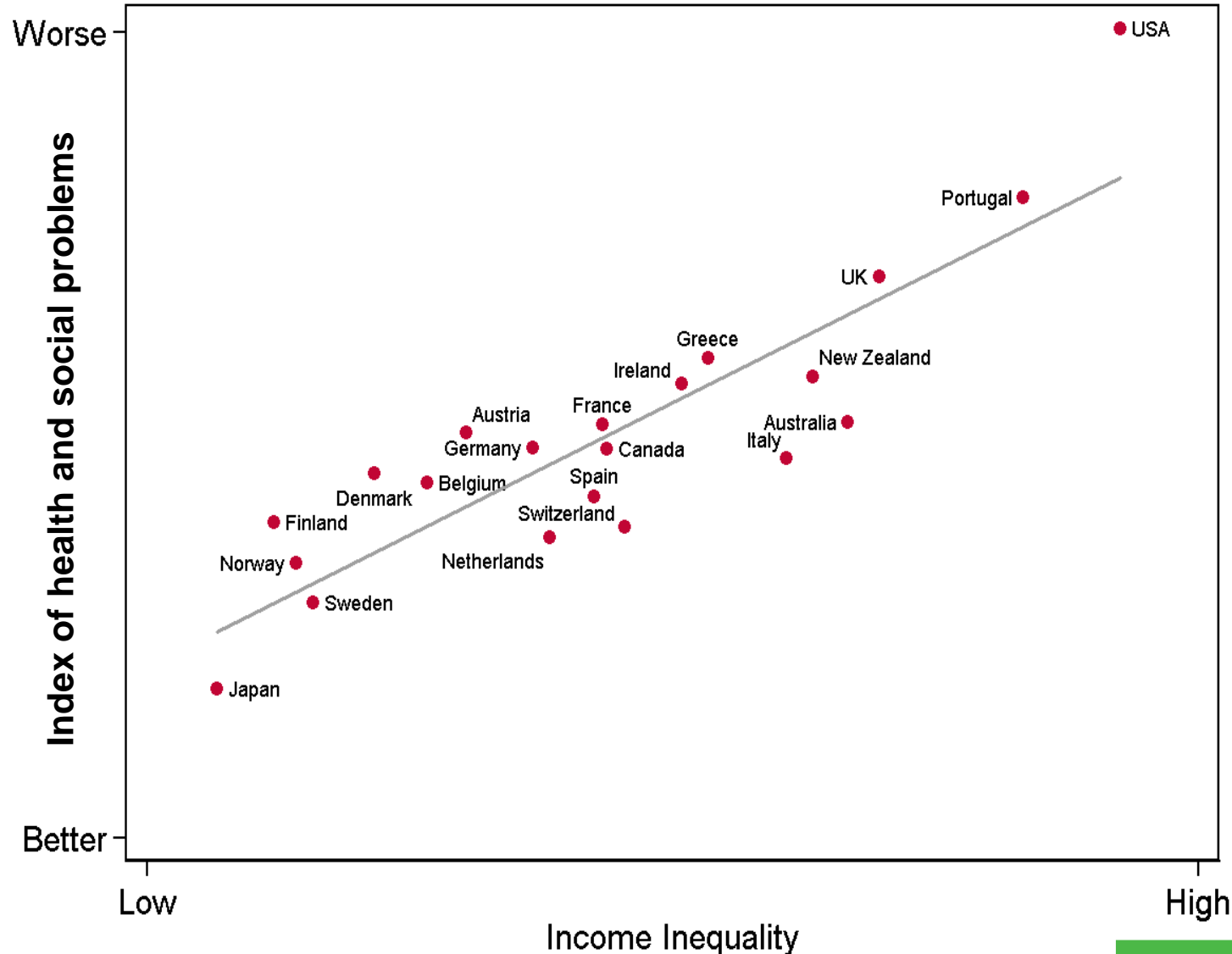
Health and social problems with social gradients and internationally comparable data

- **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:

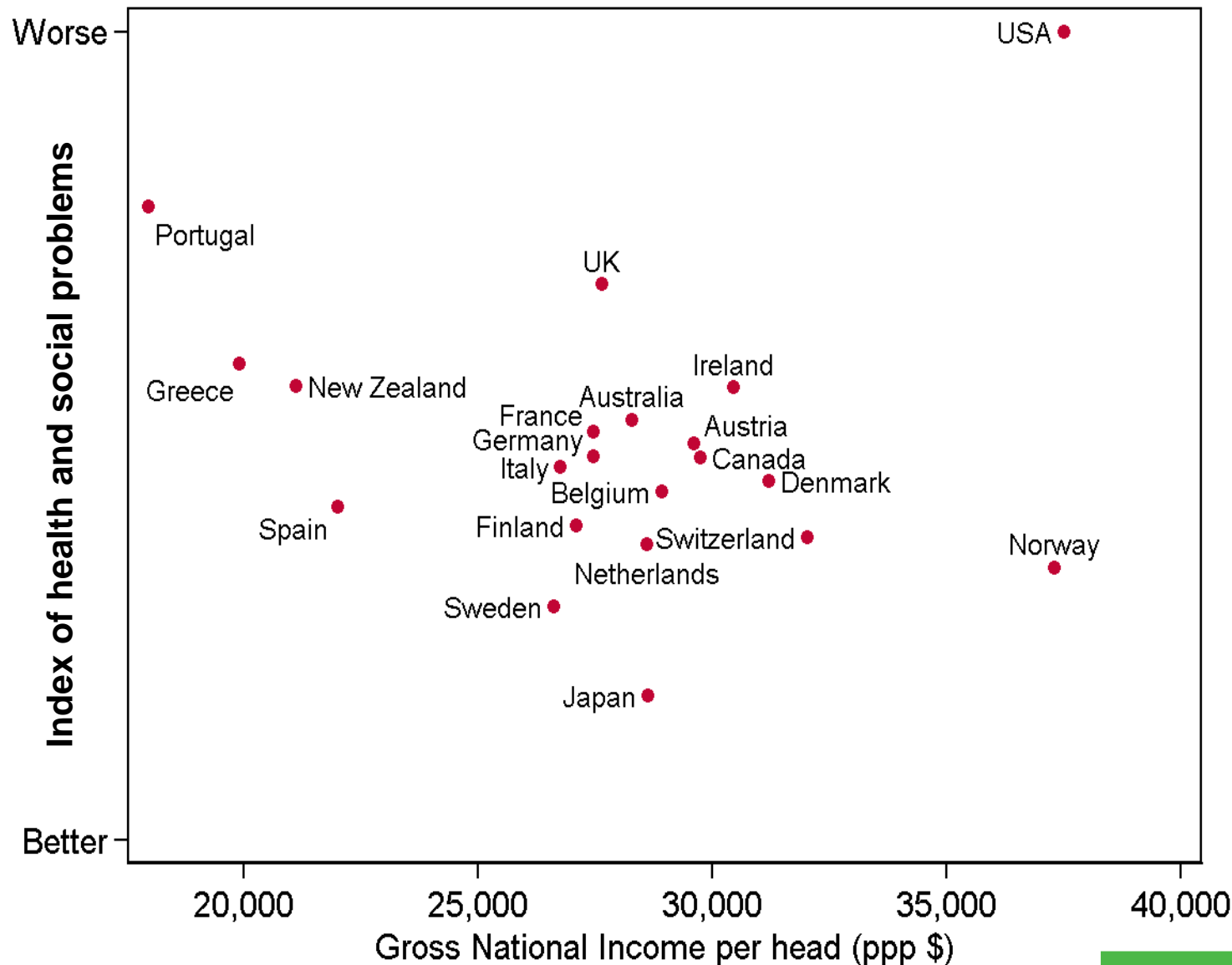
- Life expectancy
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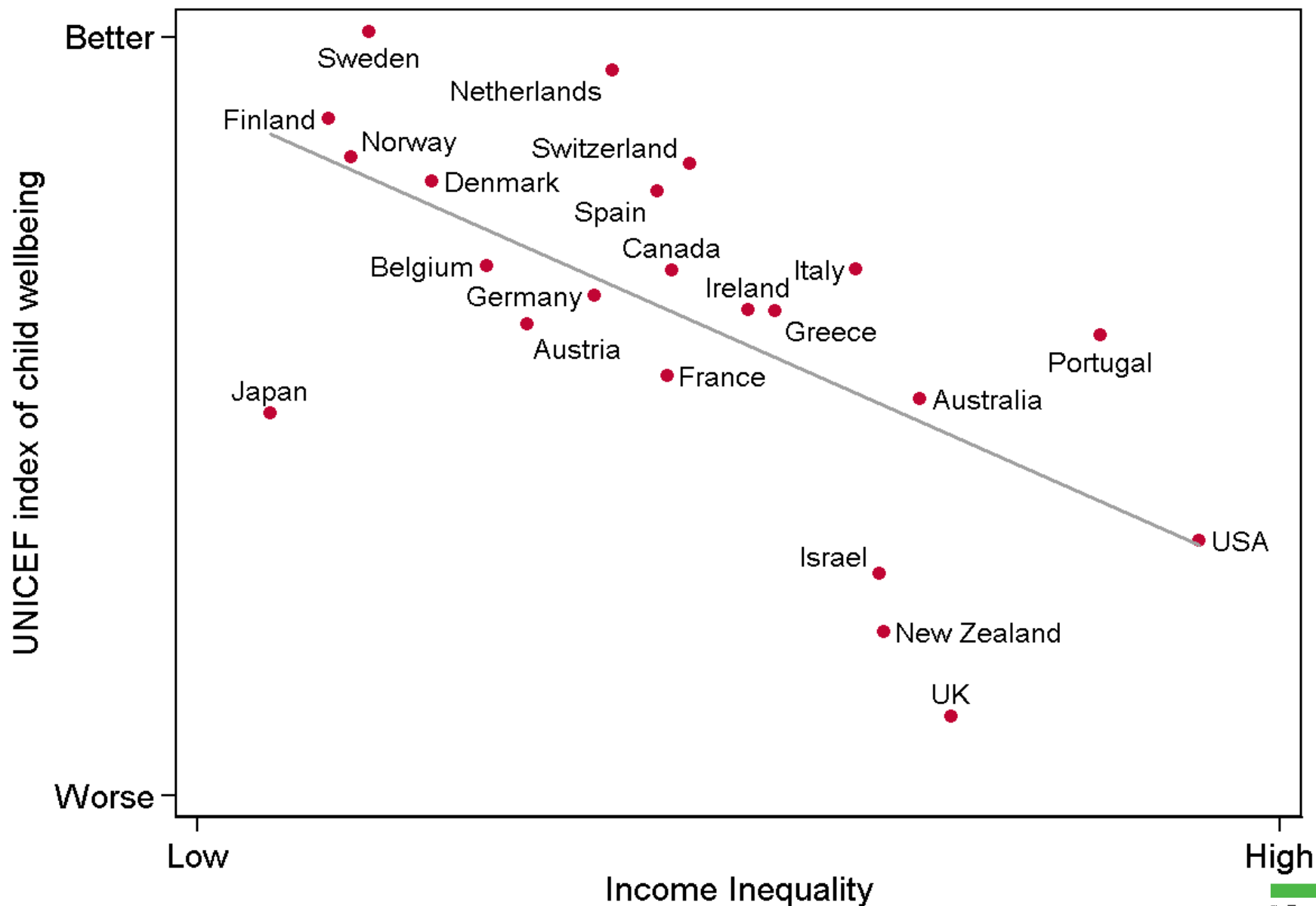
Neither health nor social problems are related to national income per head

Index of:

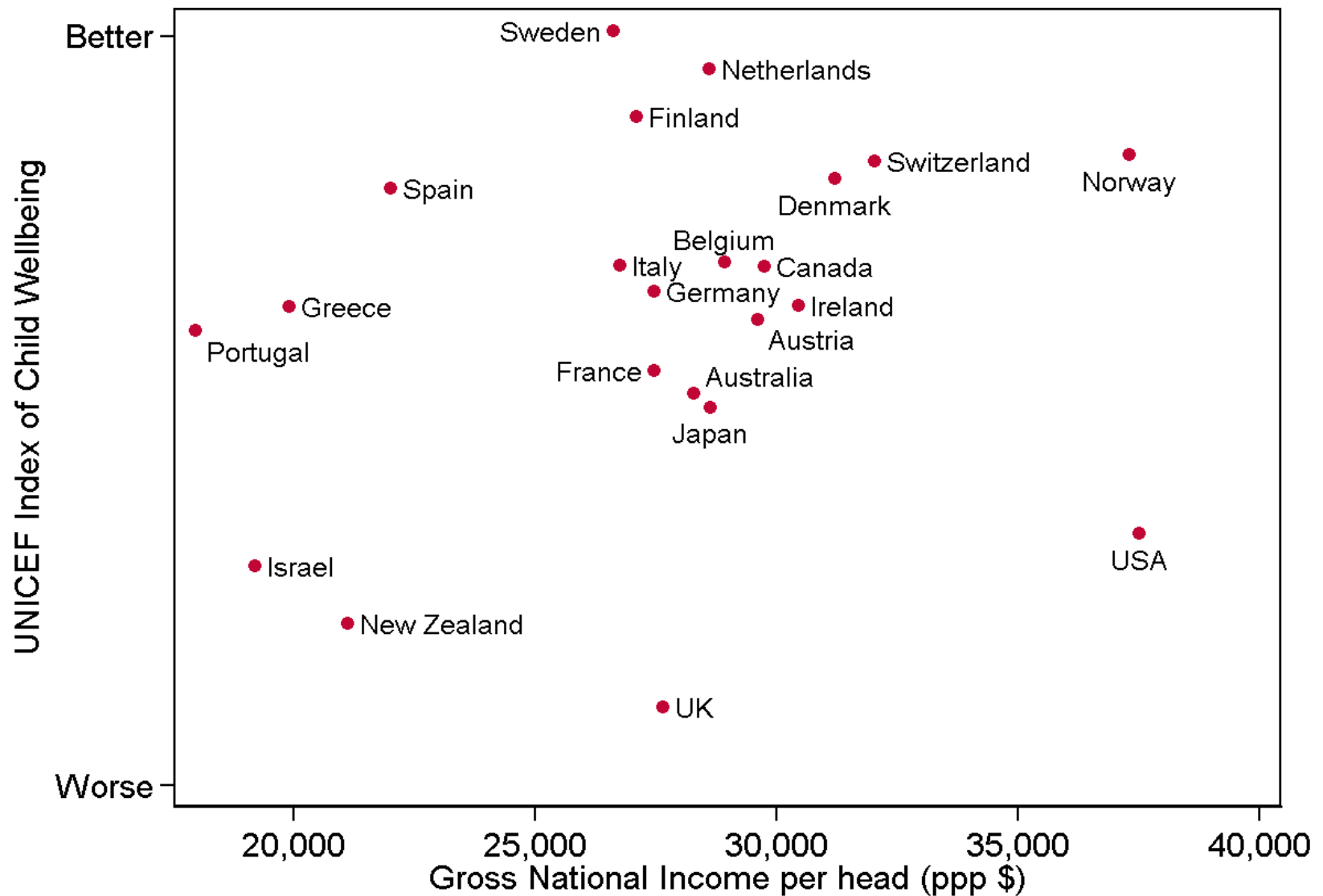
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– incl. drug & alcohol
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Child well-being is better in more equal countries



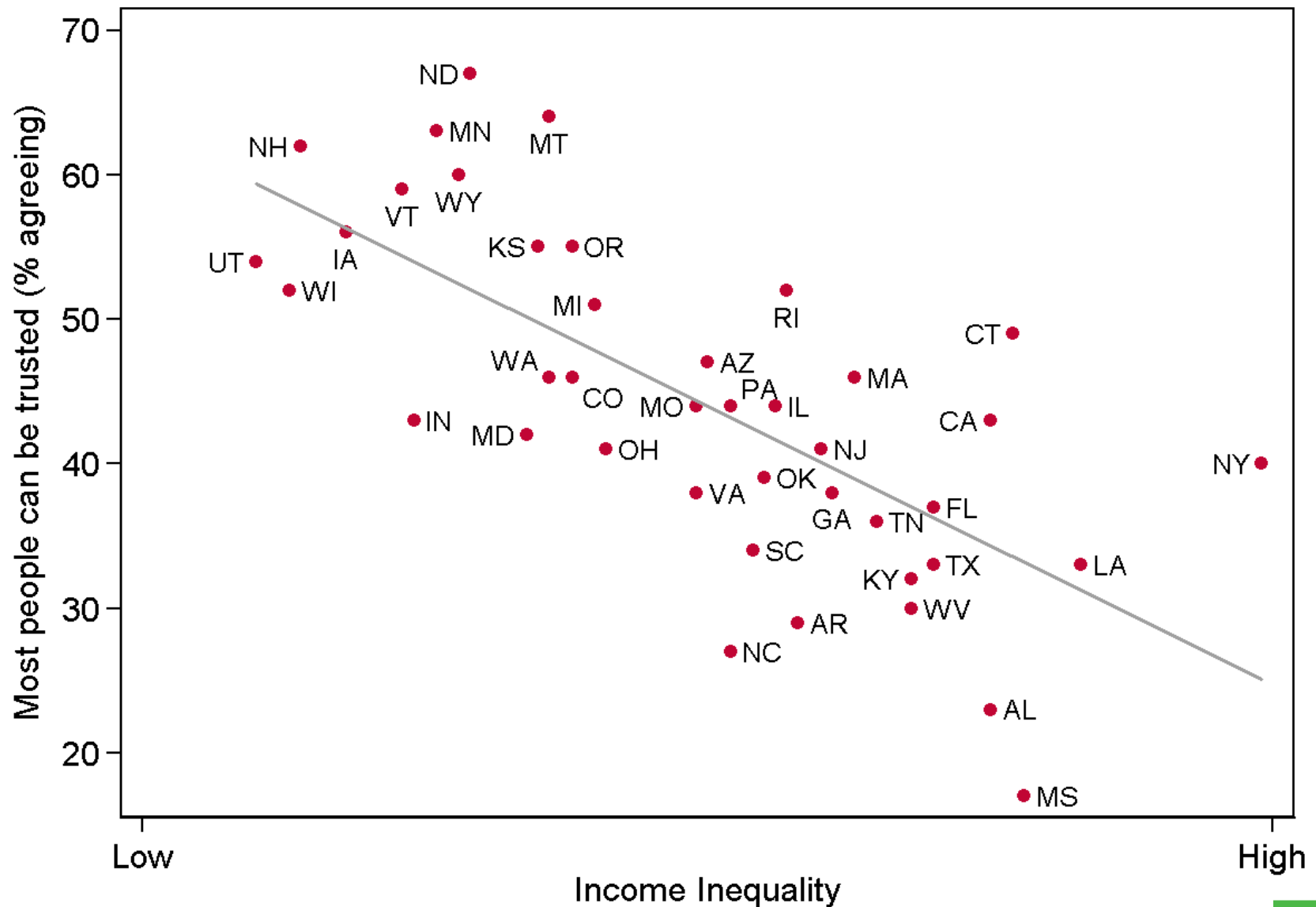
Child Wellbeing is not related to National Income per head



People in more unequal countries trust each other less



People in more unequal states of the USA trust each other less



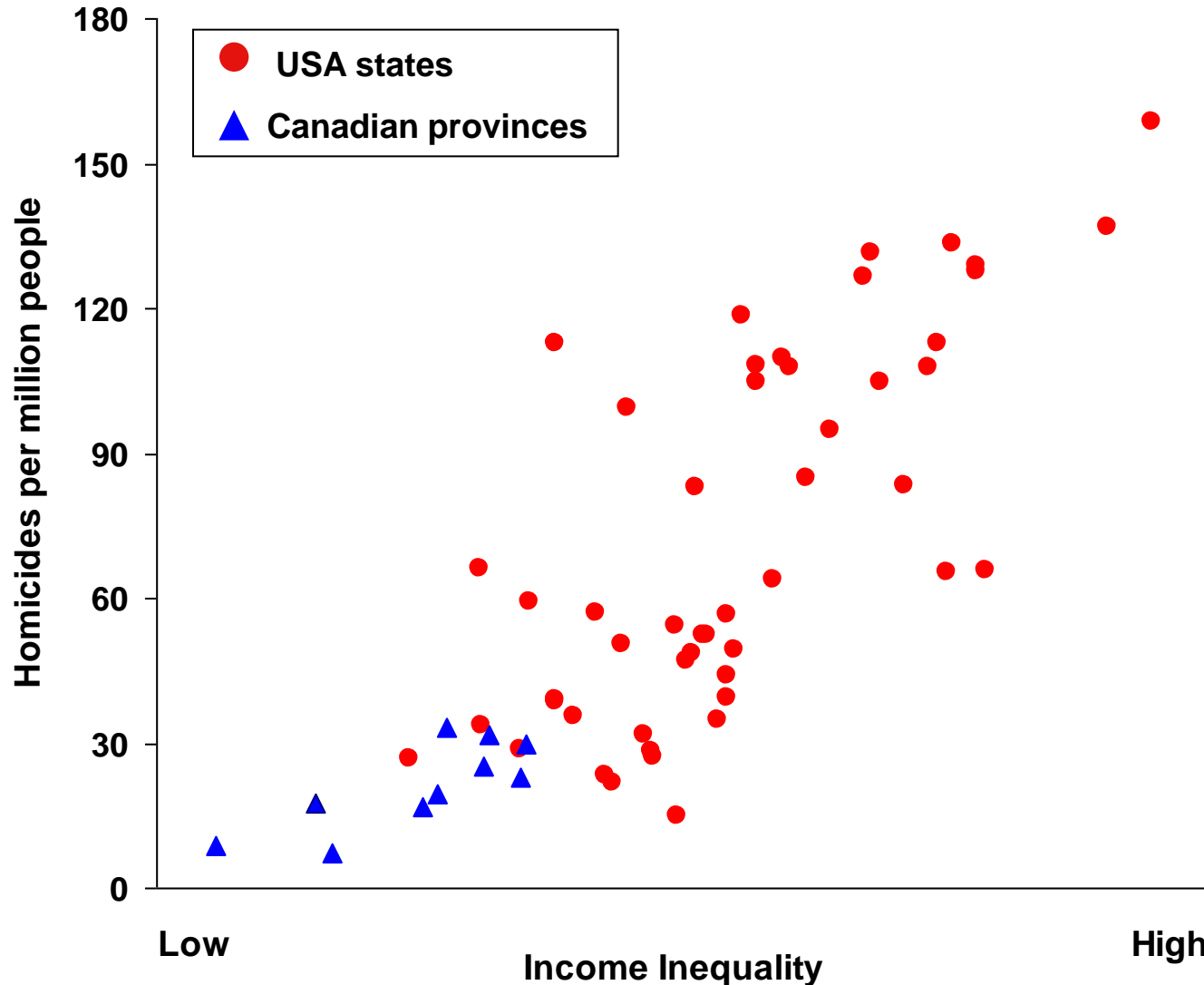
Mental illness is more common in more unequal societies



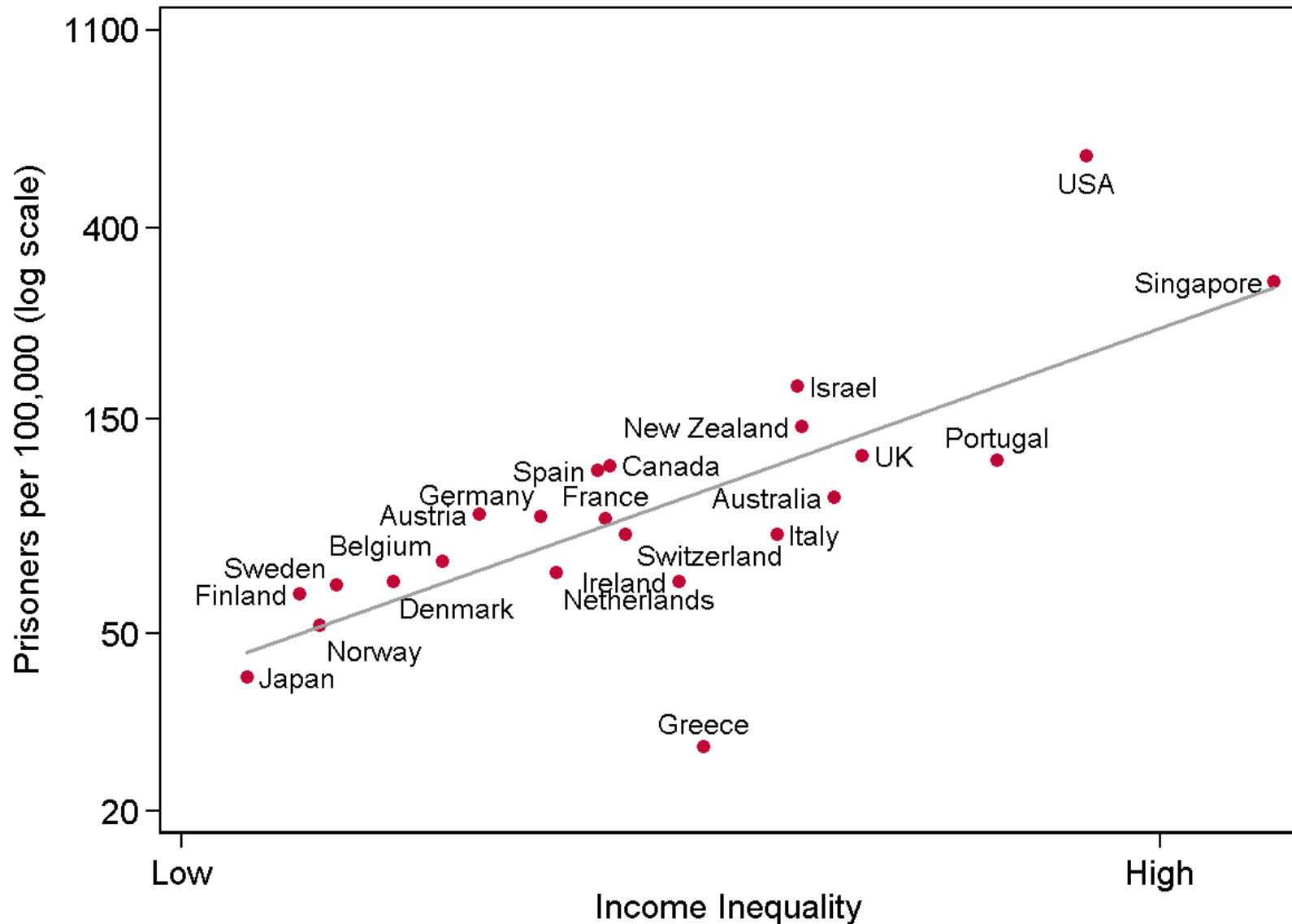
Infant Mortality Rates are Higher in More Unequal Countries



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



Imprisonment rates are higher in more unequal countries



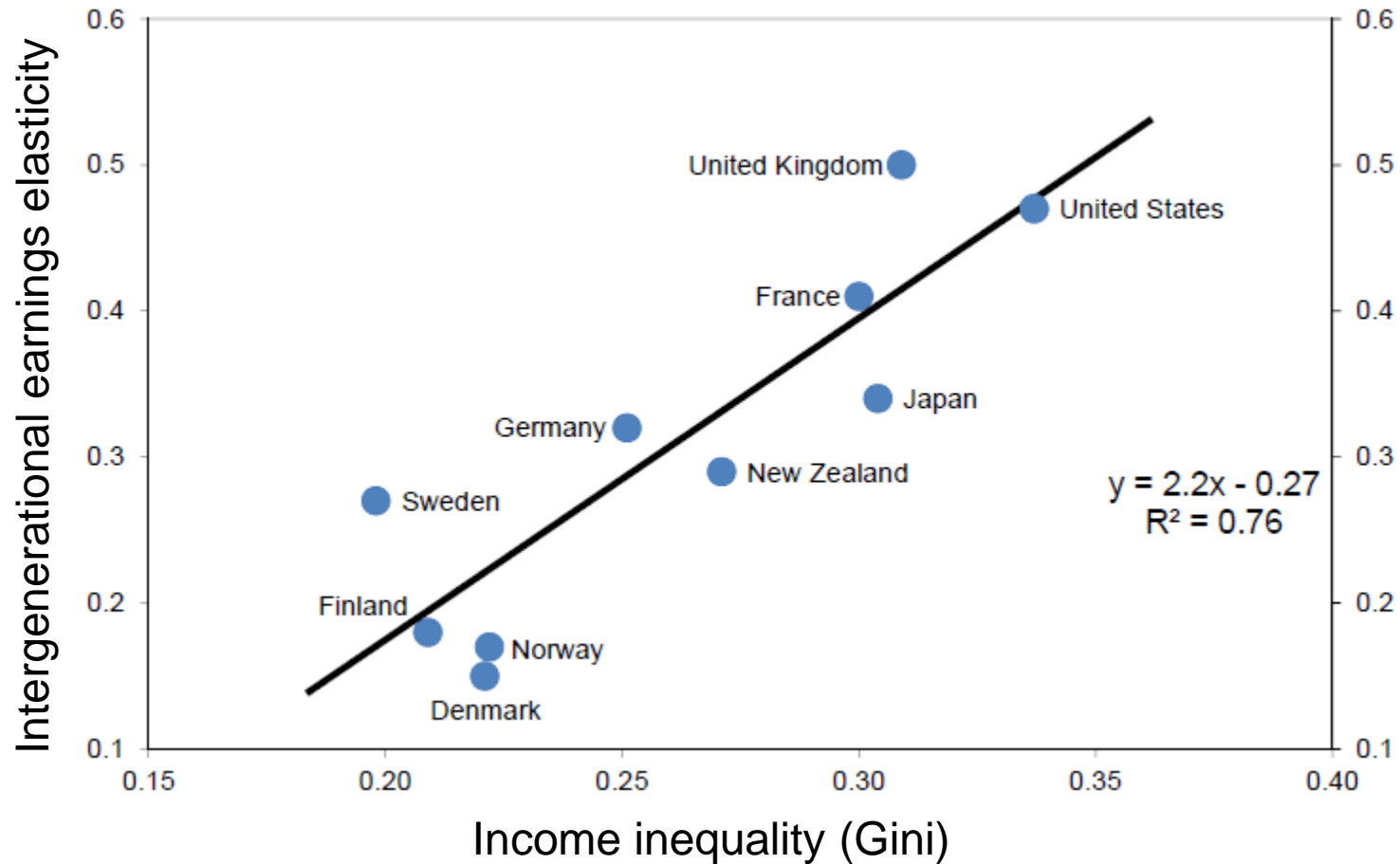
Teenage Birth Rates are Higher in More Unequal Rich Countries



Social mobility is lower in more unequal countries



Higher income inequality is associated with lower intergenerational mobility



Reproduced from Alan Krueger (2012). Data from Corak (2011) & OECD

In summary... bigger income gaps lead to deteriorations in:-

Social Relations

- Child conflict
- Homicide
- Imprisonment
- Social capital
- Trust

Health

- Drug abuse
- Infant mortality
- Life expectancy
- Mental illness
- Obesity

Human Capital

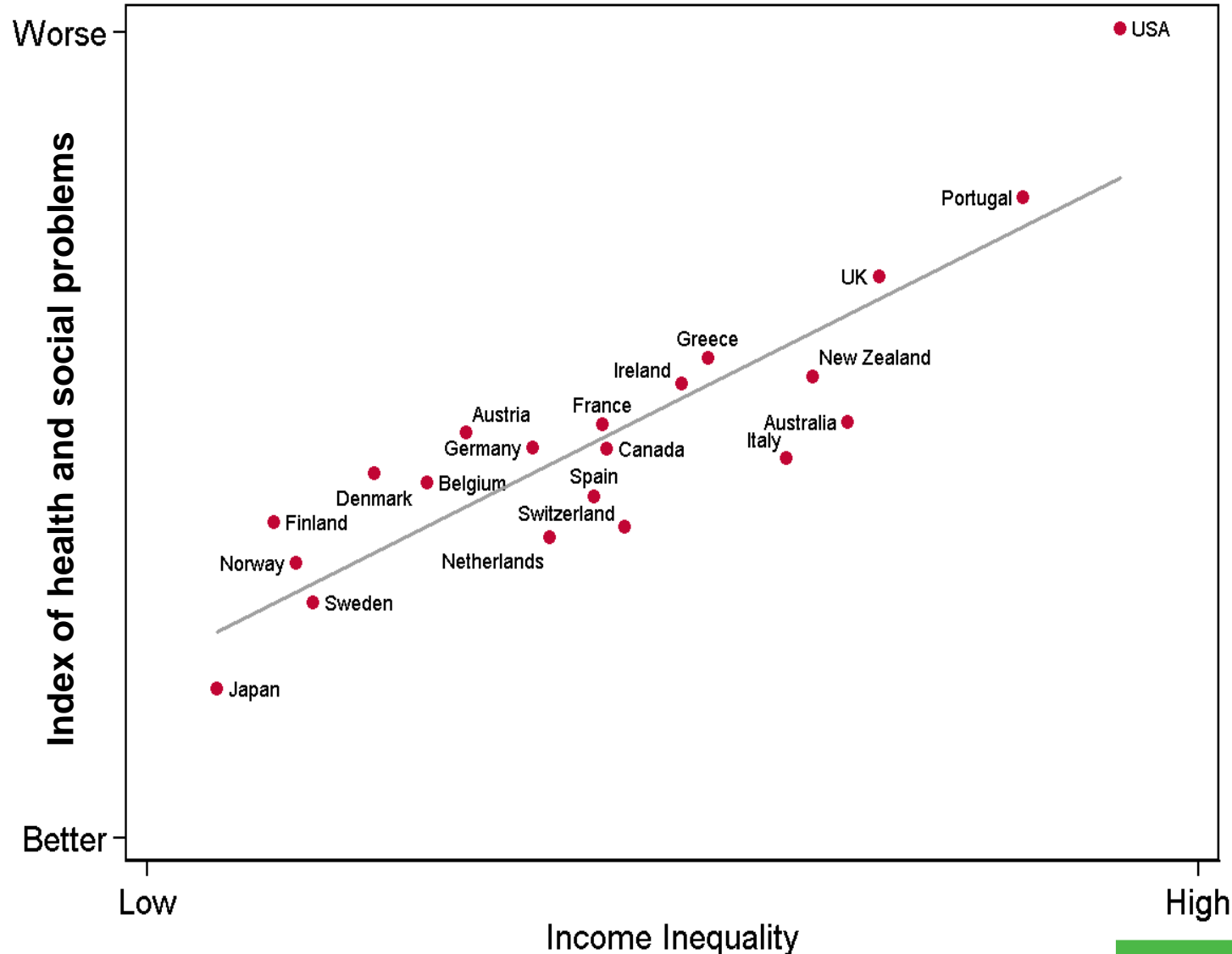
- Child wellbeing
- High school drop outs
- Math & literacy scores
- Social mobility
- Teenage births

Suicide an
exception?

Health and social problems are worse in more unequal countries

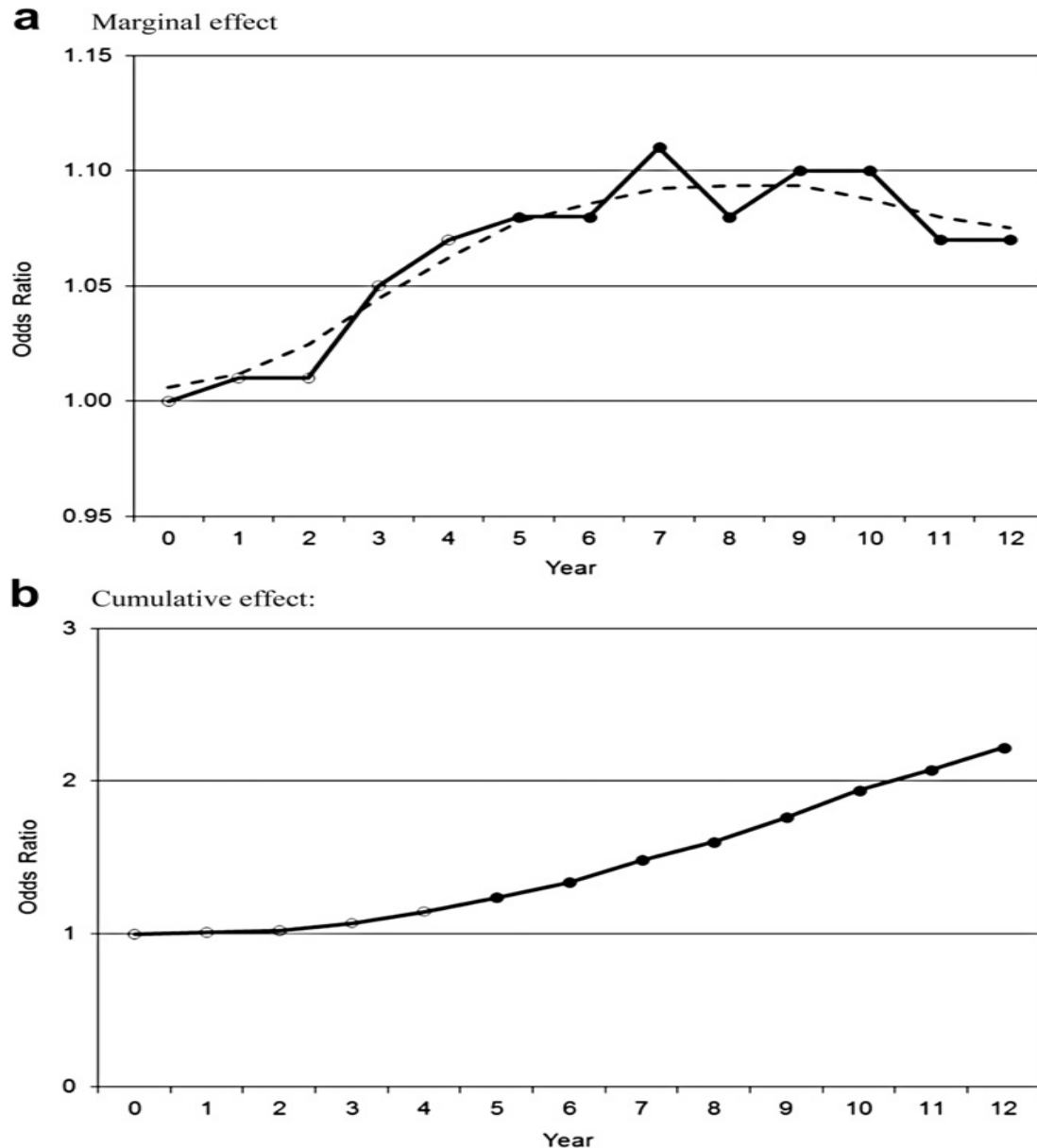
Index of:

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Changes in income inequality affect mortality 3-12 years later

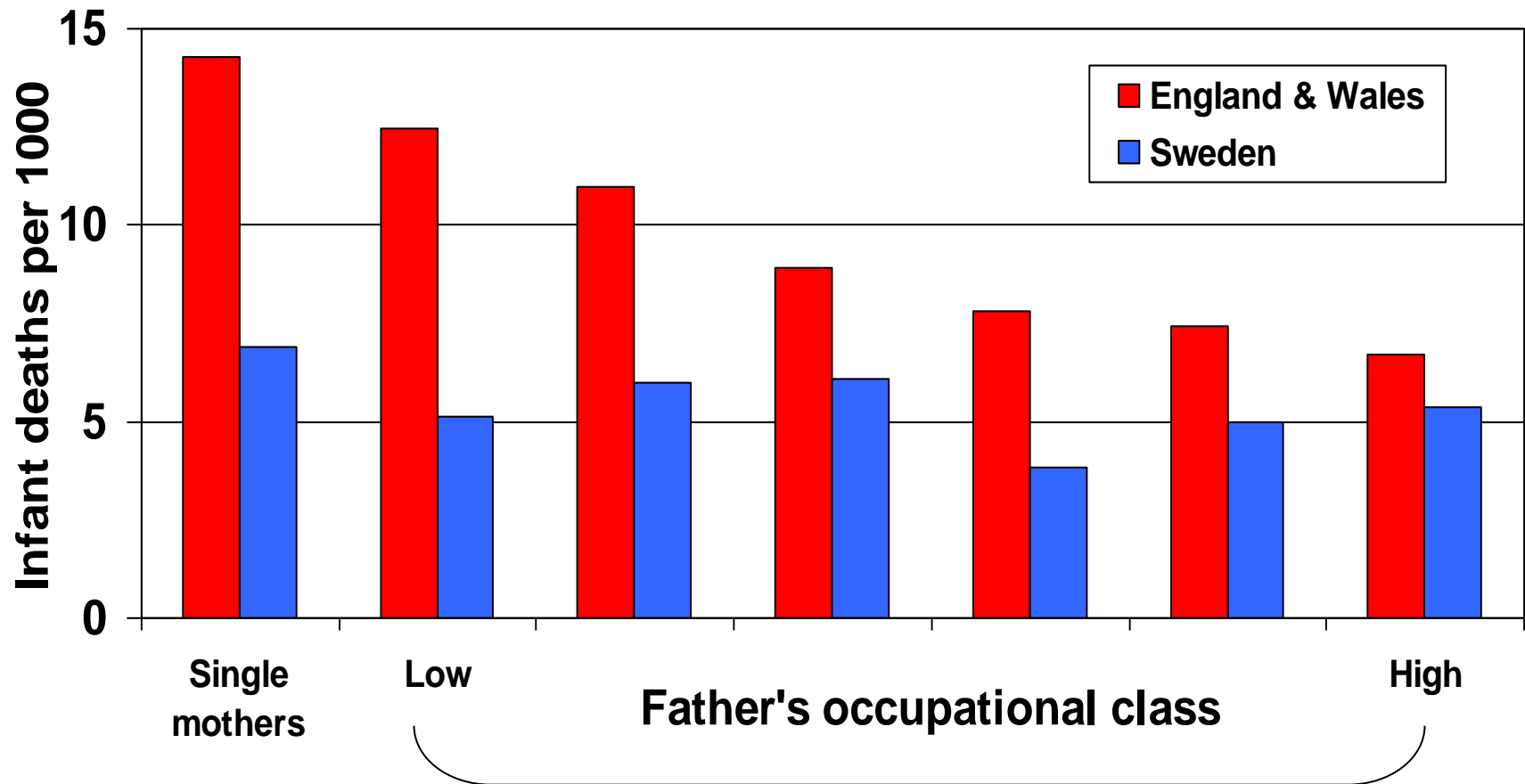
Effect of a 0.01 unit increase in Gini coefficient on deaths 1986-2006 among 701,179 respondents. (125,391 deaths)



Data from U.S. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) 1986-2004 with mortality follow-up data 1986-2006. Zheng H. Do people die from income inequality of a decade ago? *Social Science & Medicine* 2012; 75: 36-45.

The benefits of greater equality are not confined to the poor but extend to all social classes

Infant mortality by class: Sweden compared with England & Wales

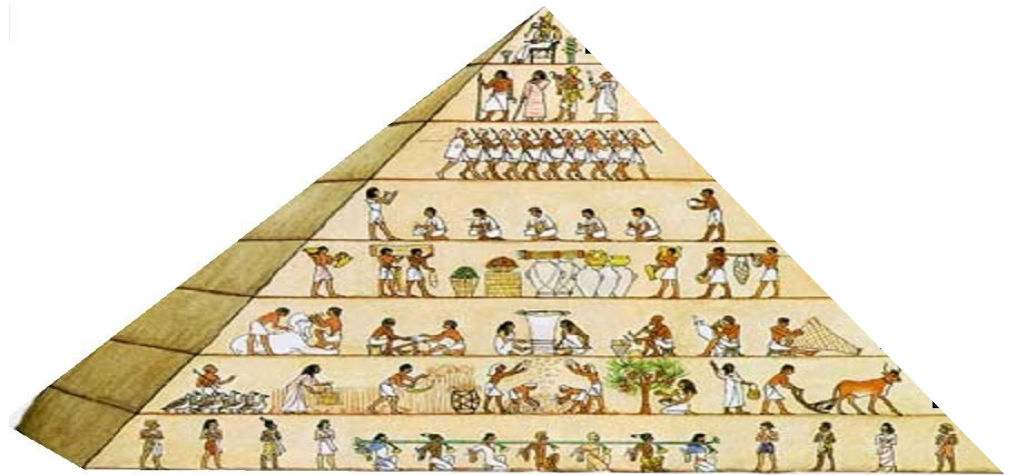
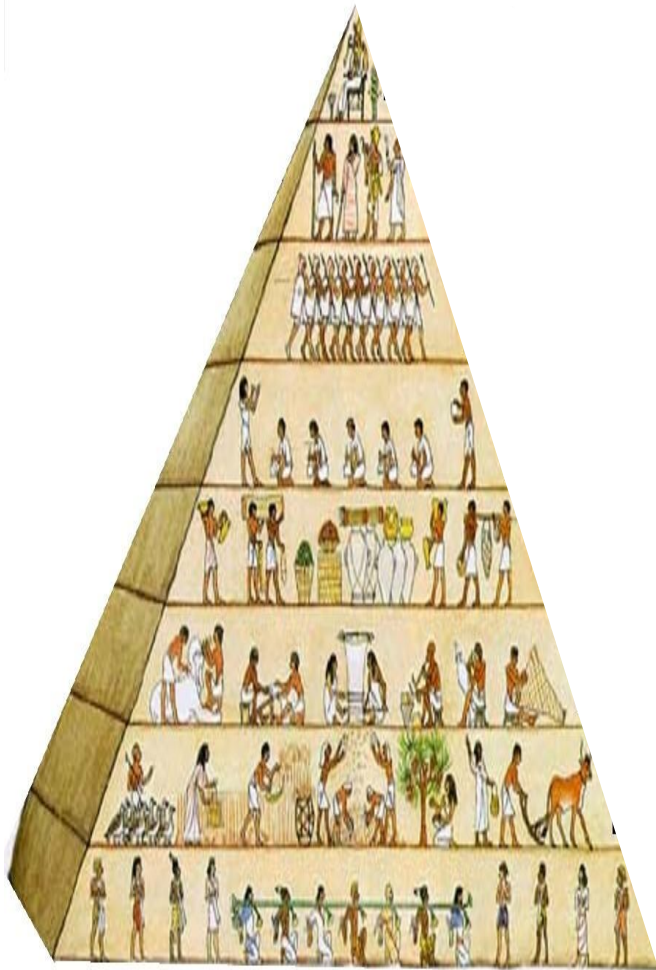


Leon, D. A., D. Vagero, et al. (1992). "Social class differences in infant mortality in Sweden: comparison with England and Wales." Brit Med J 305(6855): 687-91.

Income differences increase social class differentiation

Bigger income differences:-

- **Class becomes more important**
- **The social pyramid is higher and more hierarchical**
- **The quality of social relations deteriorates**



**More
inequality**

Valued or Devalued?

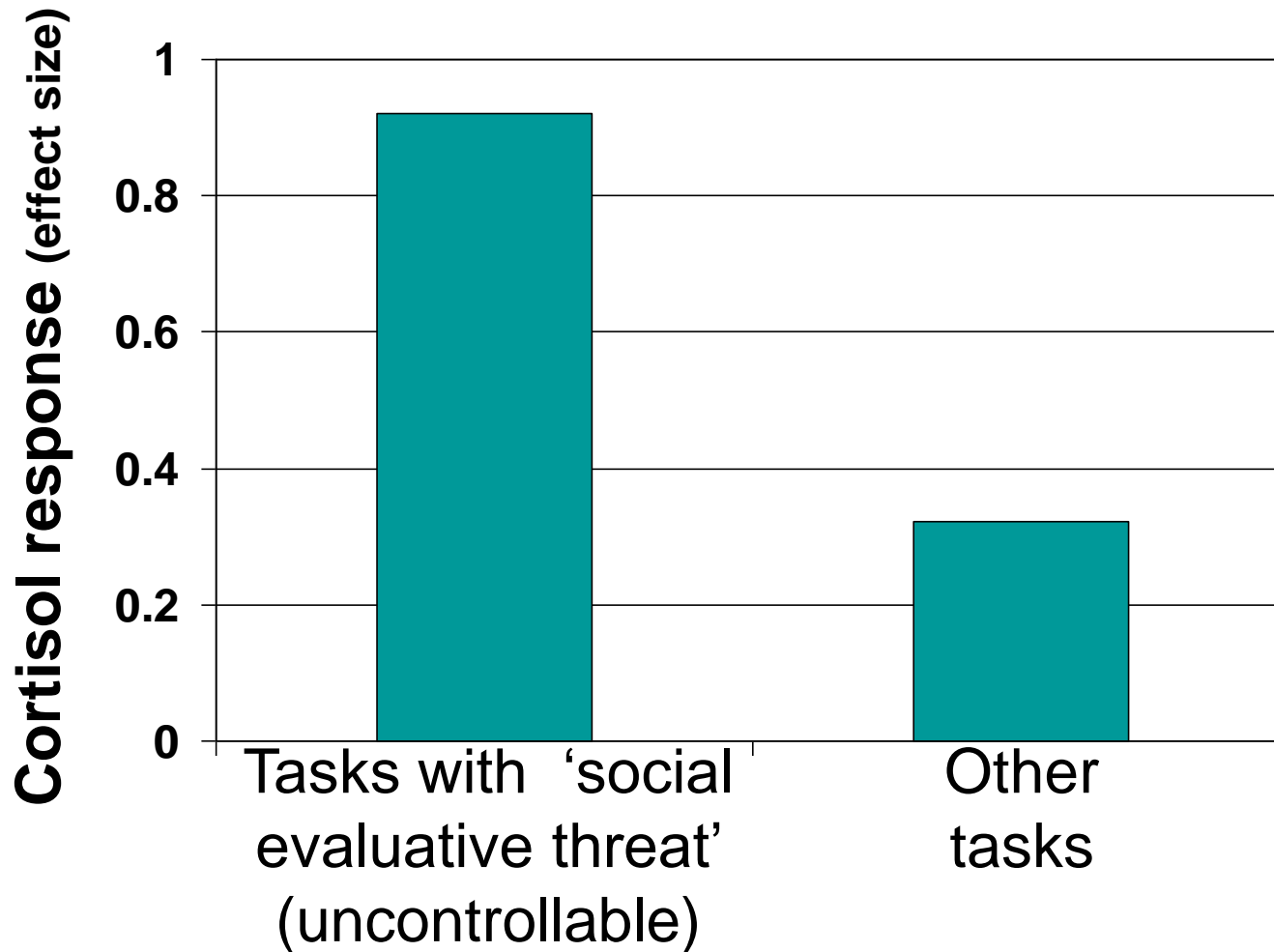
- More superiority and inferiority
- More status competition and consumerism
 - More status insecurity

- More worry about how we are seen and judged
- More “social evaluation anxiety” (threats to self-esteem & social status, fear of negative judgements)

Psychosocial risk factors for ill health

- **Low social status**
- **Weak social connections**
- **Stress in early life (pre- and postnatally)**

What kind of stressful tasks raise stress hormones most?



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

"Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status. ...It has grown with civilization...as an invidious distinction between classes...."

Marshall Sahlins (1974) p. 37

wir sind
mehr als
werkzeuge

RESPEKT!

Am 1. Mai 2007 in Zürich:
10 h Umzug Central
12 h Helvetiaplatz

SGB | USS

1. Mai
TAG DER ARBEIT

% Rich & poor in UK with various durable goods

ONS Family Spending 2006

	Poorest 20% (% with each item)	Richest 20% (% with each item)
Central Heating	90	98
Washing machine	85	99
Microwave	85	94
Telephone	83	97
Video recorder	74	90
CD player	70	97
Mobile phone	55	91
Satellite TV	45	79
Tumble dryer	37	74
Computer	28	92
Internet connection	18	88
Dishwasher	10	67

Living conditions & Poverty: USA 2005

The poorest 12.6% (below Federal poverty line)

- **80% have air conditioning**
 - **78% have a VCR or DVD player**
 - **73% own a car or truck**
 - **31% own more than one car**
 - **55% have two or more TVs**
 - **36% have a dishwasher**
 - **36% have a computer**
 - **43% own their homes**
 - **10% in mobile homes**
 - **6% over-crowded (>1 per room)**
-
- **Children's protein intake: 100% above recommended**
 - **Most vitamins & minerals: well over recommended**

Social Status and Friendship

Two sides of the same coin:

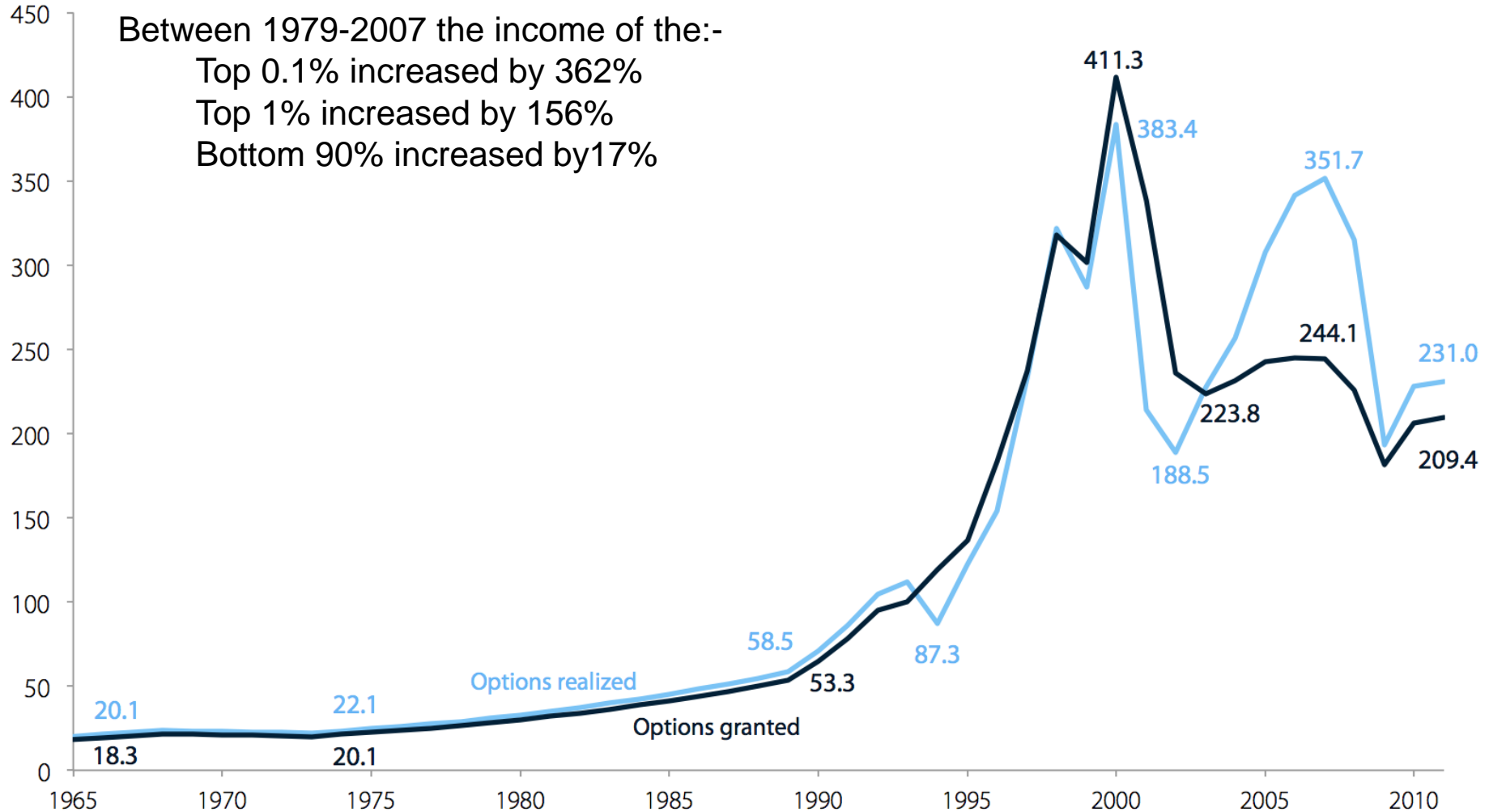
Social status (dominance hierarchies, pecking orders) are orderings based on power, coercion and privileged access to resources – regardless of the needs of others.

Friendship, in contrast, is based on reciprocity, mutuality, social obligations, sharing and a recognition of each other's needs.

The effects of inequality - a two stage process

- 1. adult experience of inequality**
- 2. passed on to children – epigenetics?**

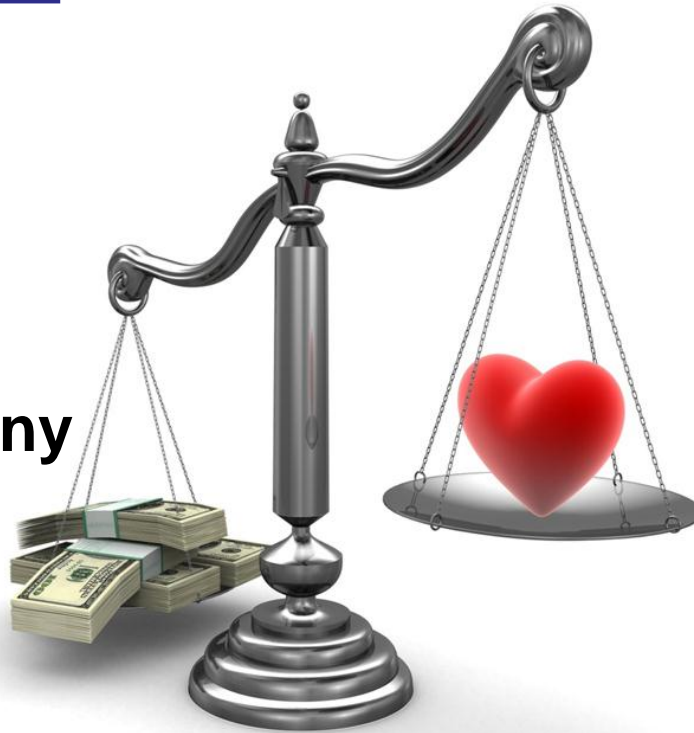
Changing ratio of CEO pay to average pay of production & non-supervisory workers in top 350 US companies



What can be done?

Income differences before tax

- Stronger Trade Unions
- Increase company democracy - employee ownership etc
- Promote more directors from within companies



Taxes & benefits

- Stop tax avoidance
- End tax havens
- Make taxation progressive again

**Sustainability needs
greater equality**



Photo by kind permission of Matt Stuart





The Spirit Level

Why Equality is Better for Everyone

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

'A big idea, big enough to change political thinking'
Sunday Times

'A sweeping theory of everything' *Guardian*



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

The **Equality Trust**

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