



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*



Richard Wilkinson

Emeritus Professor of
Social Epidemiology
University of Nottingham

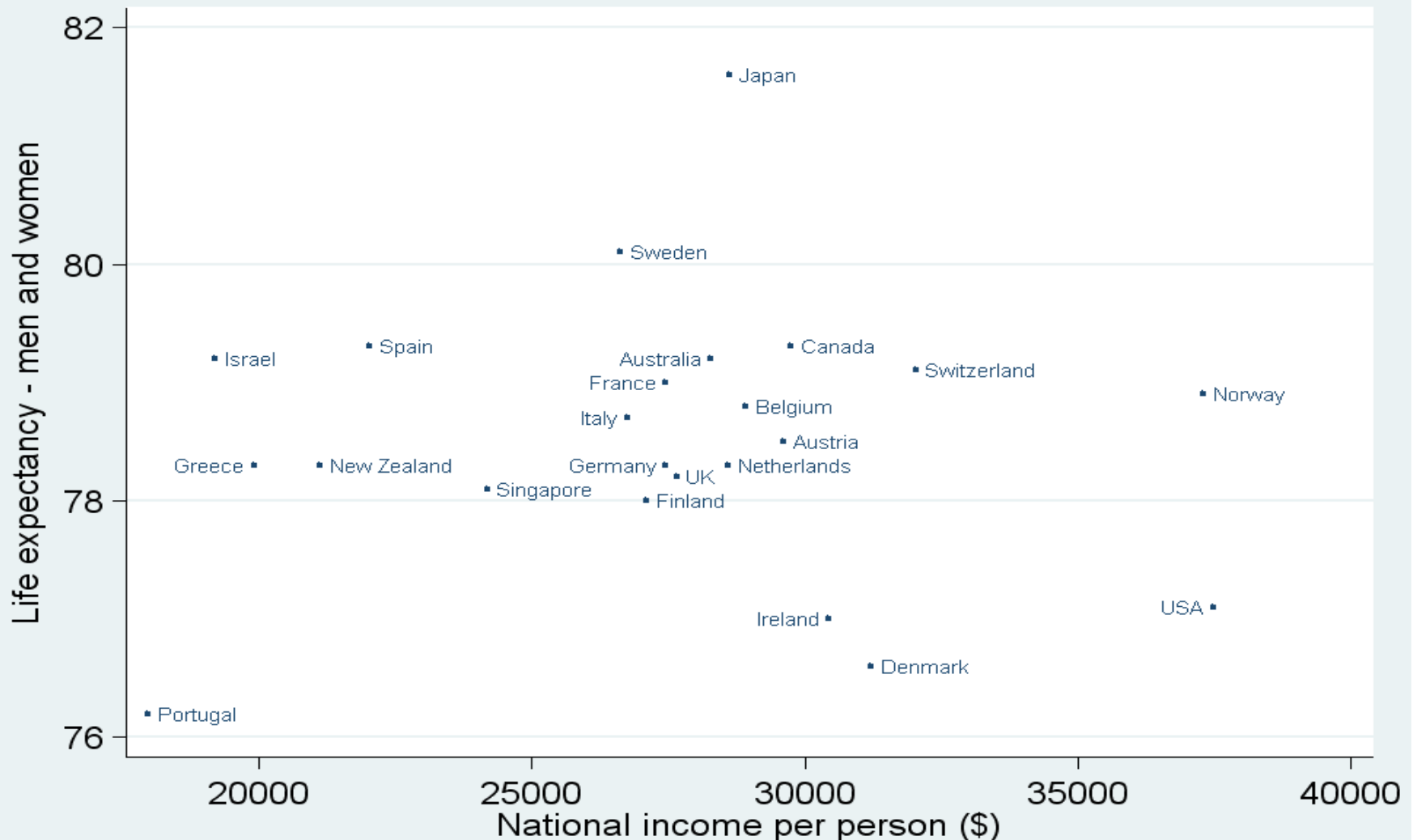
&

Kate Pickett

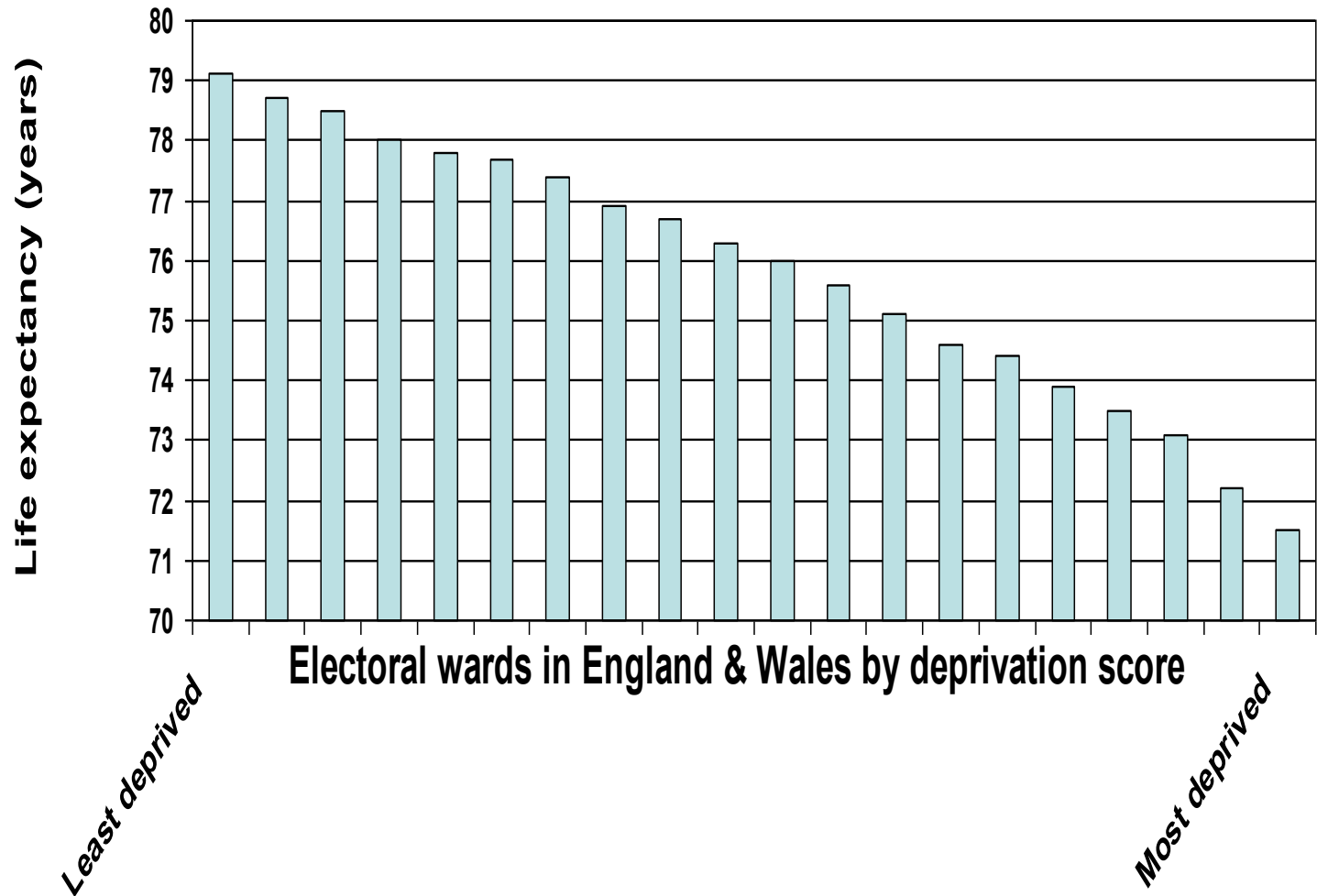
Professor of Epidemiology
University of York

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

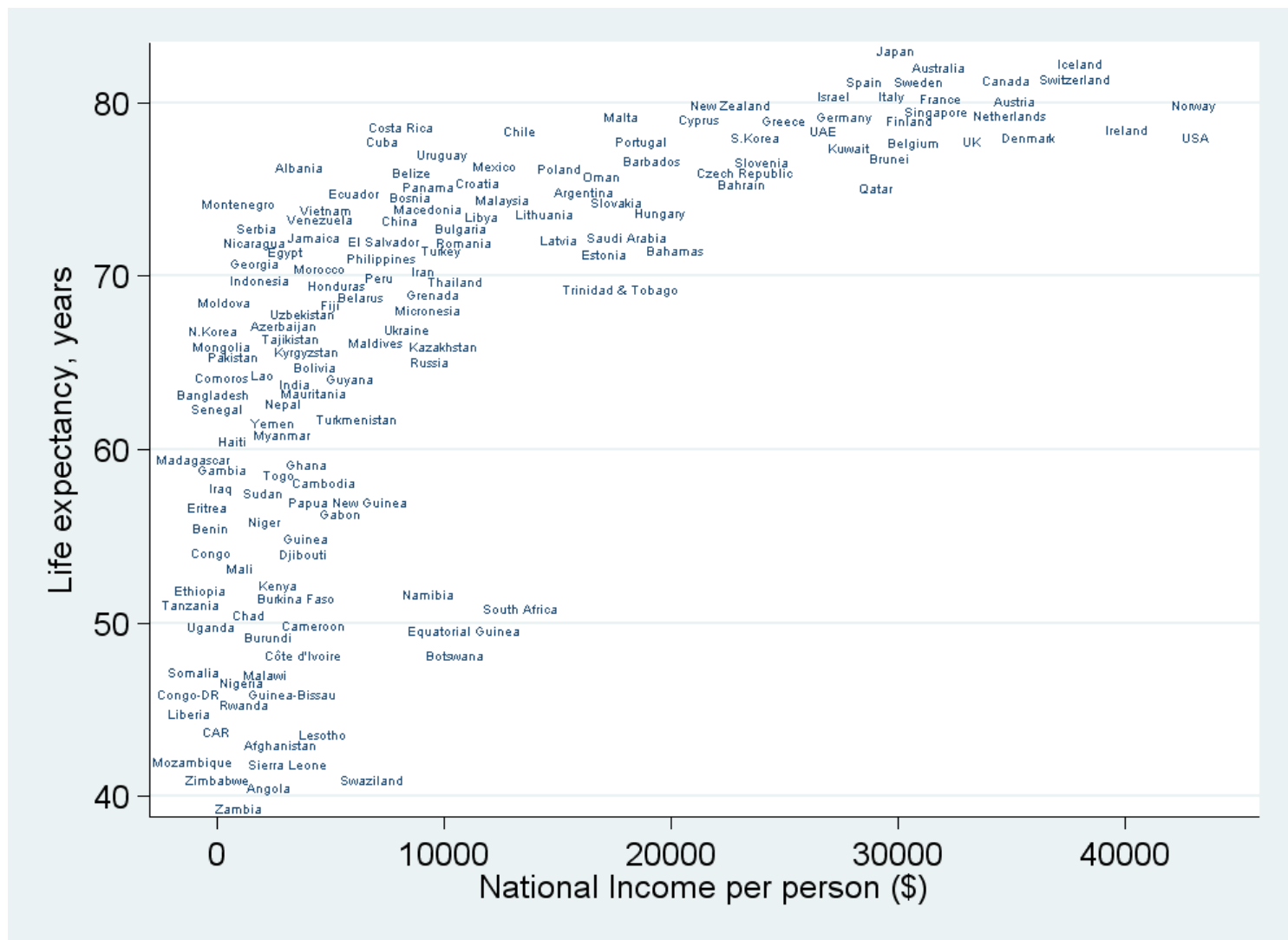
Among the rich countries life expectancy is not related to national differences in average income



...but life expectancy is related to income differences
within rich societies



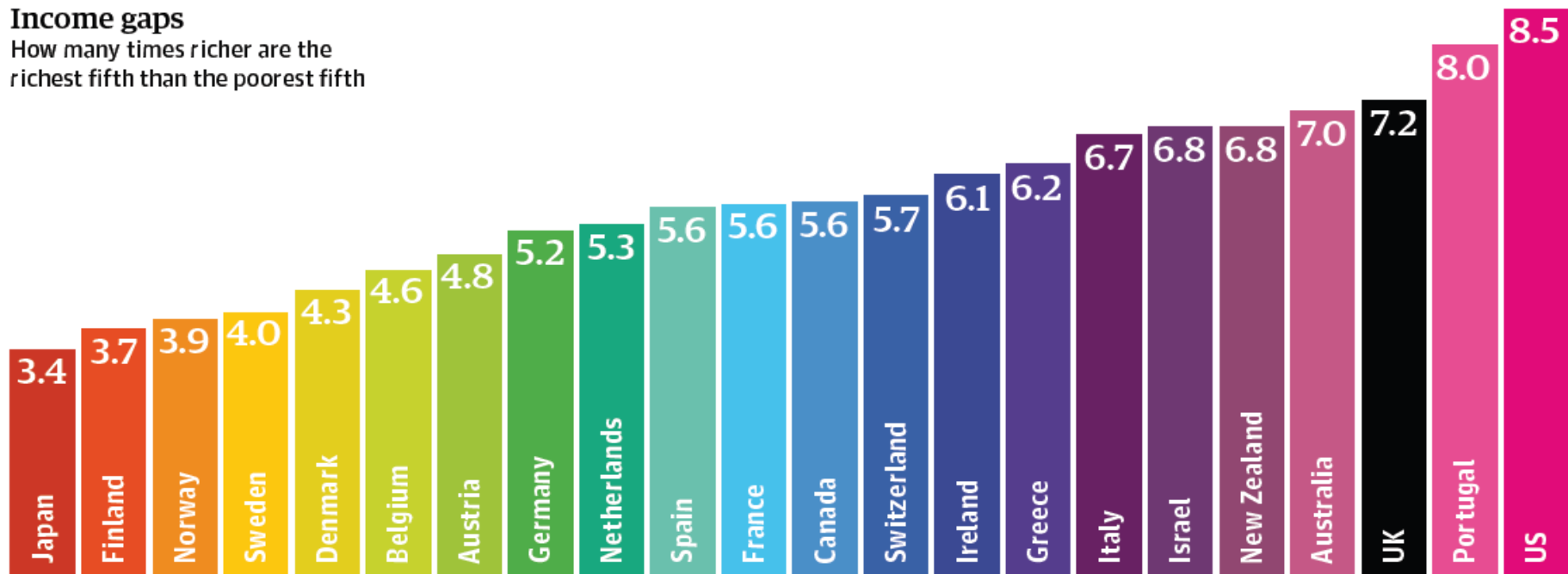
Income per head and life-expectancy: rich & poor countries



How much richer are the richest 20% than the poorest 20%?

Income gaps

How many times richer are the richest fifth than the poorest fifth



DECEMBER 9, 1995

\$1.95

TIME

SPIES, SPIES EVERYWHERE
The U.S. Roundup
Accelerates



Children Having Children

Teen Pregnancy
In America

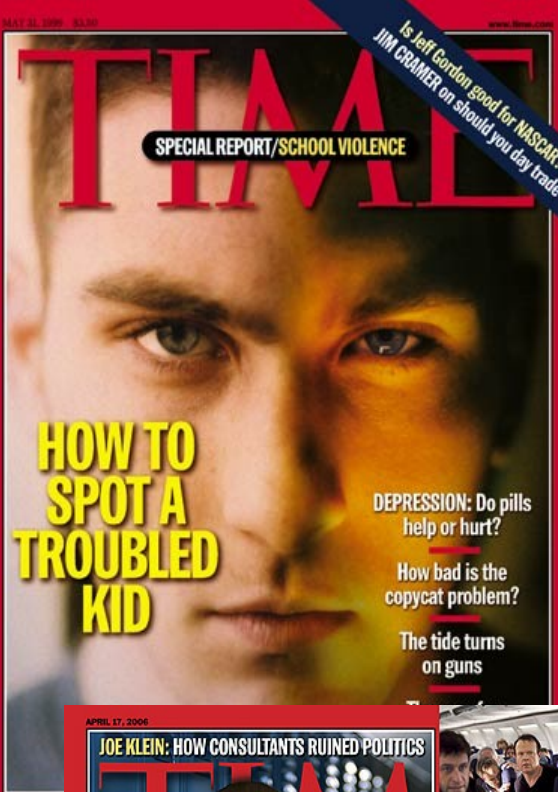


SHATTERED LIVES



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, 2006

JOE KLEIN: HOW CONSULTANTS RUINED POLITICS



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

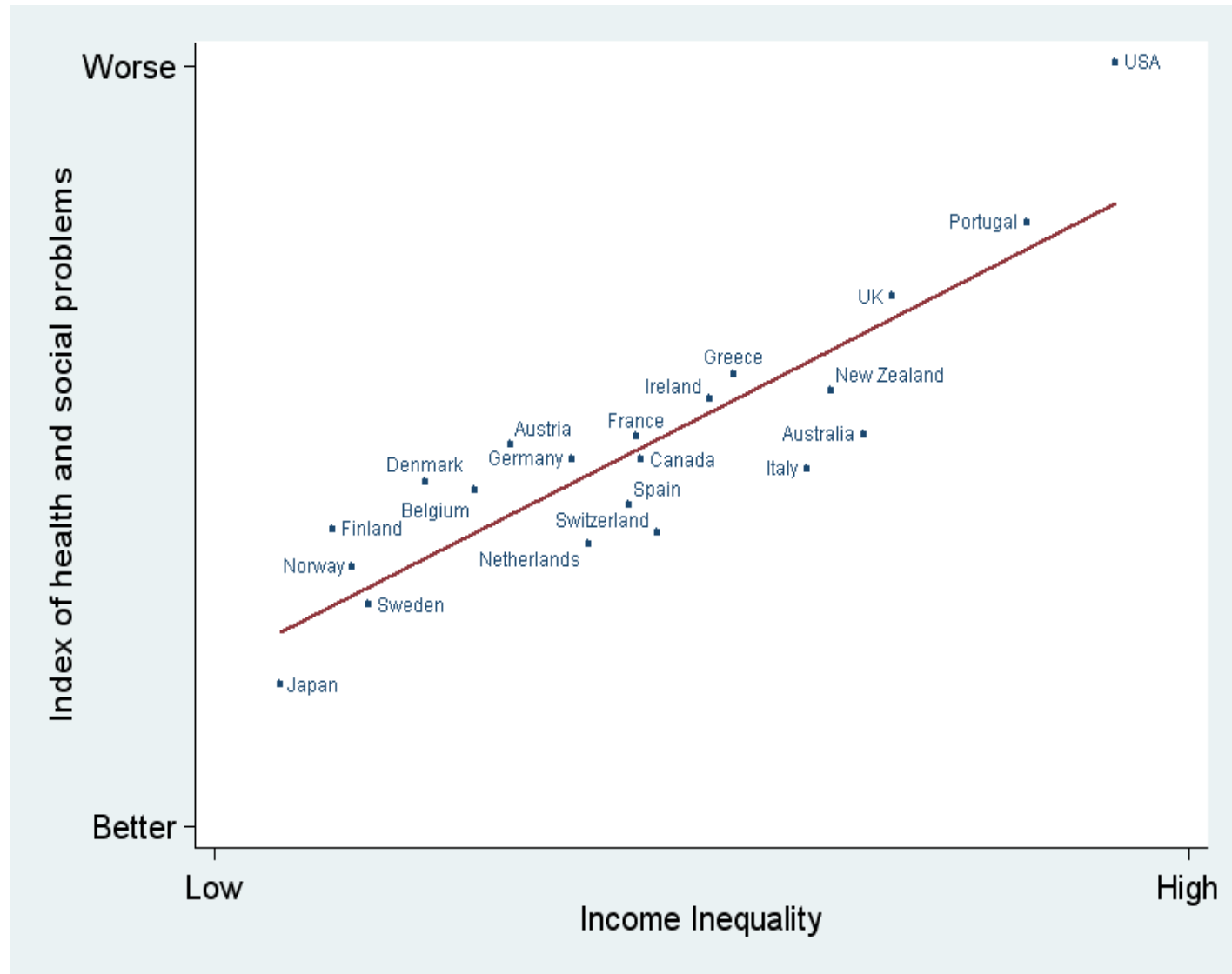
Christine Harden, 18,
of Shelbyville, Ind.



Health and Social Problems are Worse in More Unequal Countries

Index of:

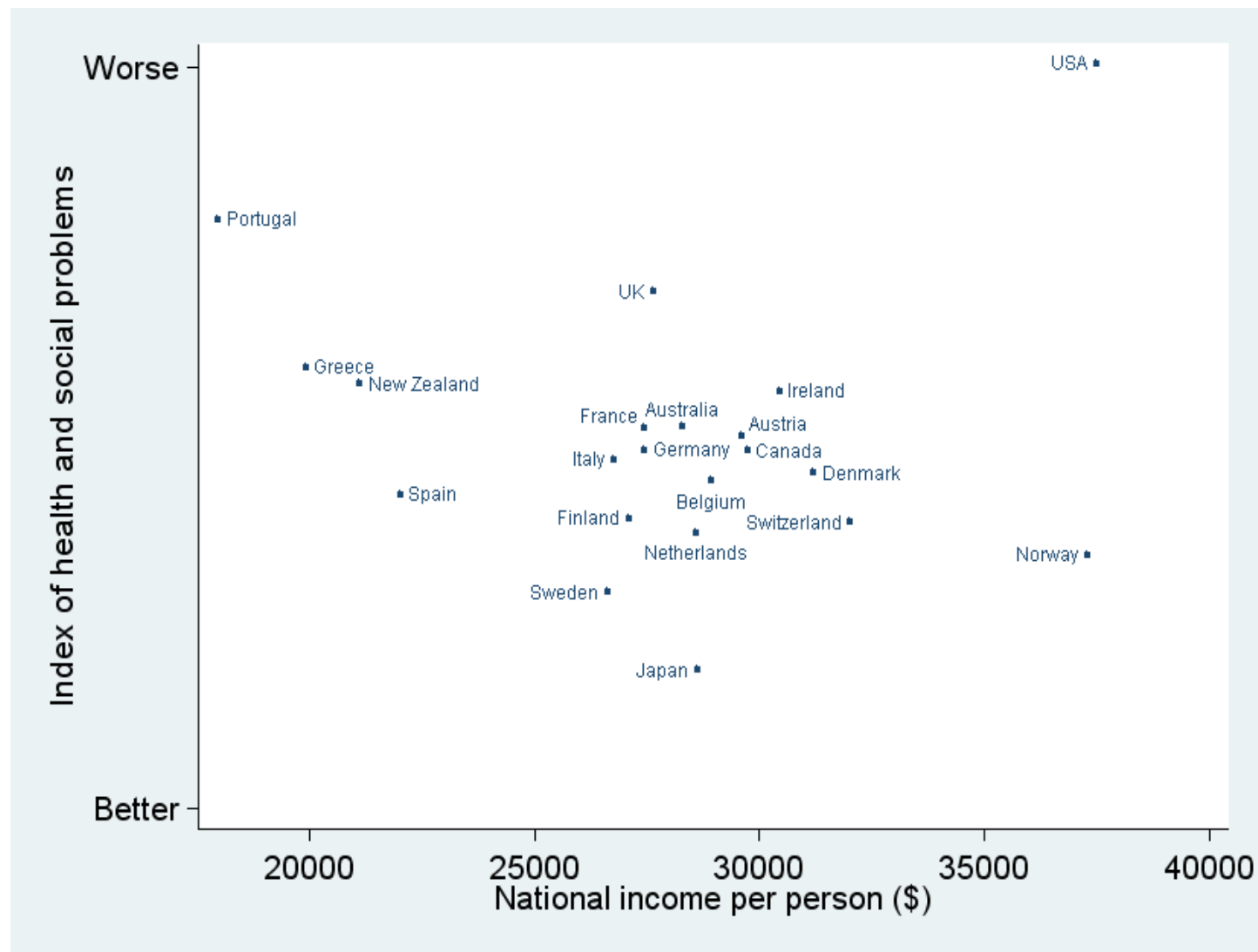
- Life expectancy
- Math & Literacy
- Infant mortality
- Homicides
- Imprisonment
- Teenage births
- Trust
- Obesity
- Mental illness – incl. drug & alcohol addiction
- Social mobility



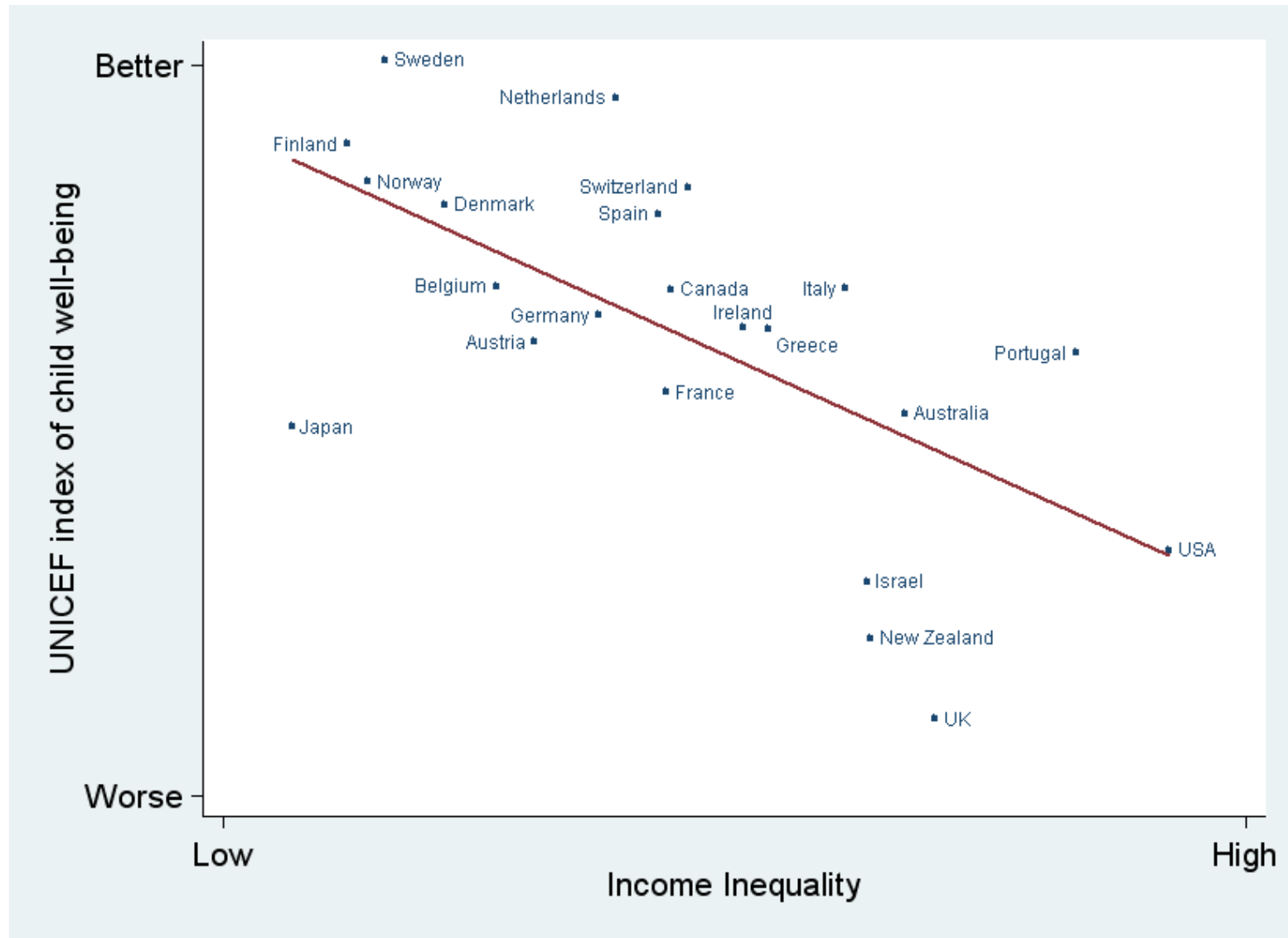
Health and Social Problems are not Related to Average Income in Rich Countries

Index of:

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



Child Well-being is Better in More Equal Rich Countries



Child-Wellbeing is Unrelated to Average Incomes in Rich Countries

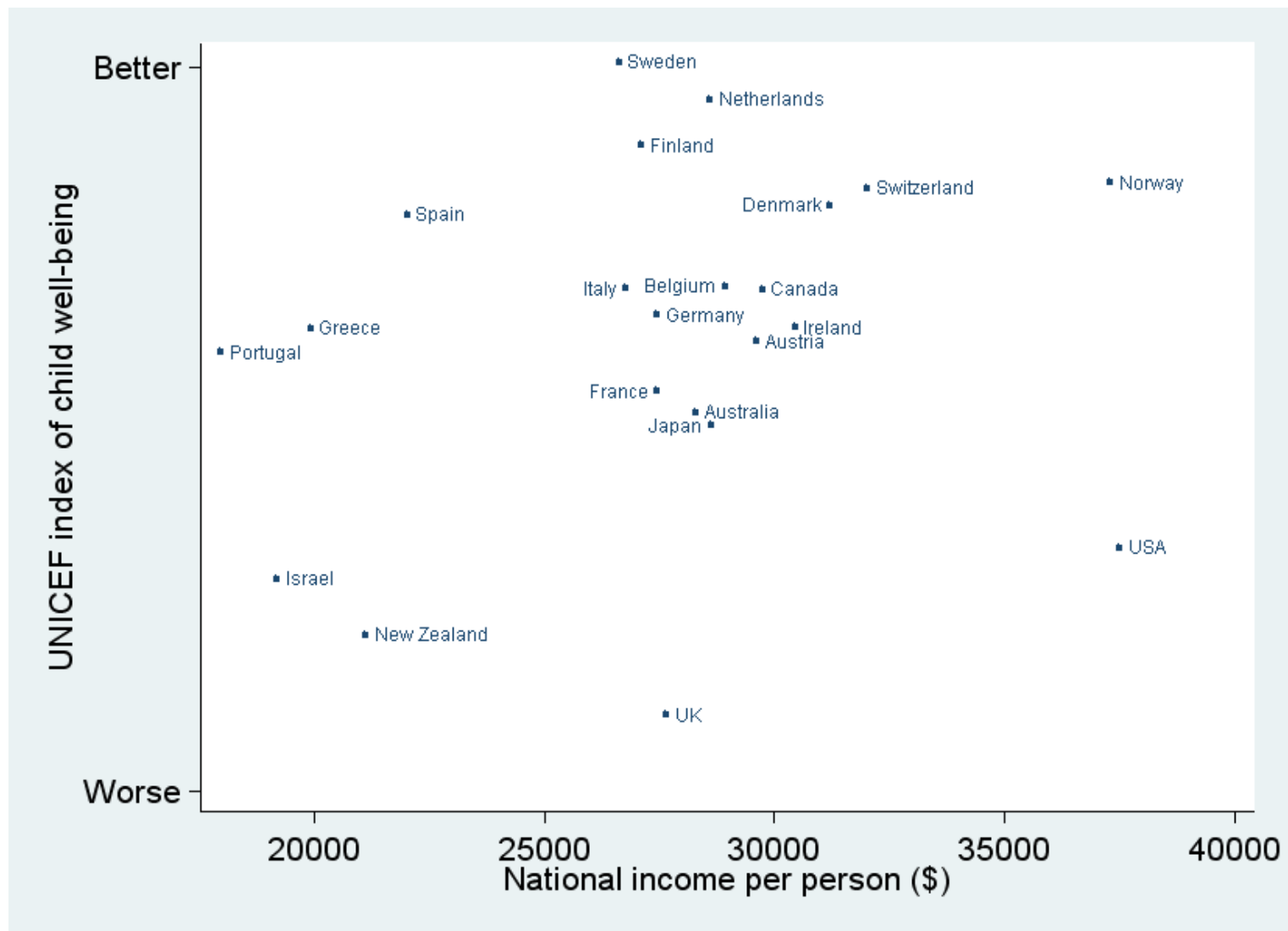


Table 2 | Correlations of measures of child wellbeing with income inequality, and average income across the 50 US states (including District of Columbia)

Measure of child wellbeing	Income inequality		Average income	
	<i>r</i>	P value	<i>r</i>	P value
Teenage births ¹²	0.72	<0.001	-0.55	<0.001
Juvenile homicides ¹²	0.31	0.03	0.00	0.99
Infant mortality*	0.55	<0.001	-0.20	0.15
Low birth weight*	0.65	<0.001	-0.01	0.99
Educational performance (combined maths and reading scores for 15 year olds)† ⁴	-0.69	<0.001	0.08	0.58
Dropping out of high school† ⁴	0.66	<0.001	-0.28	0.04
Overweight	0.64	<0.001	-0.07	0.63
Mental health problems	0.37	0.01	-0.14	0.33

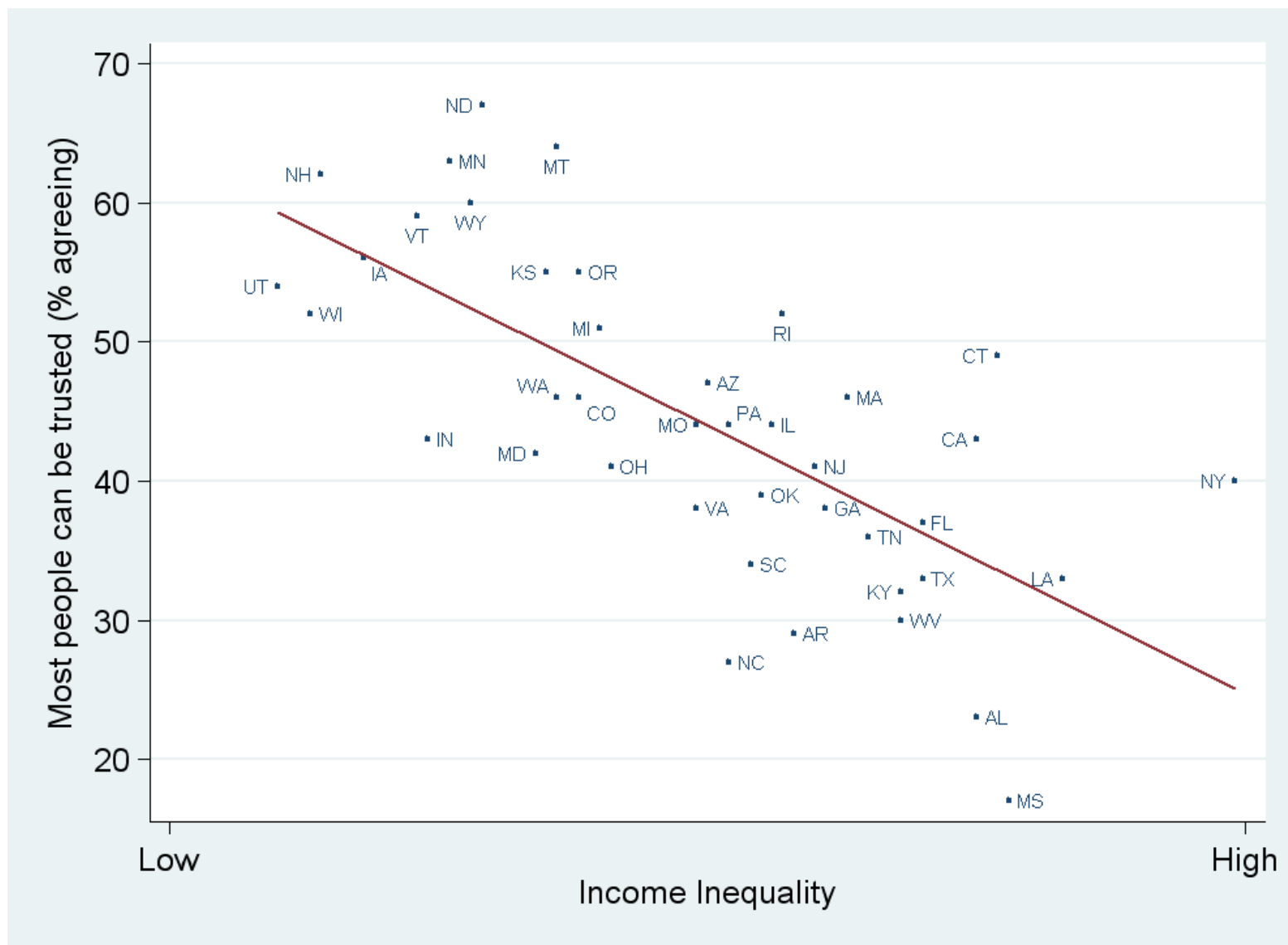
*Similar findings have been reported elsewhere.^{11 40}

†Similar findings have been reported elsewhere.¹¹

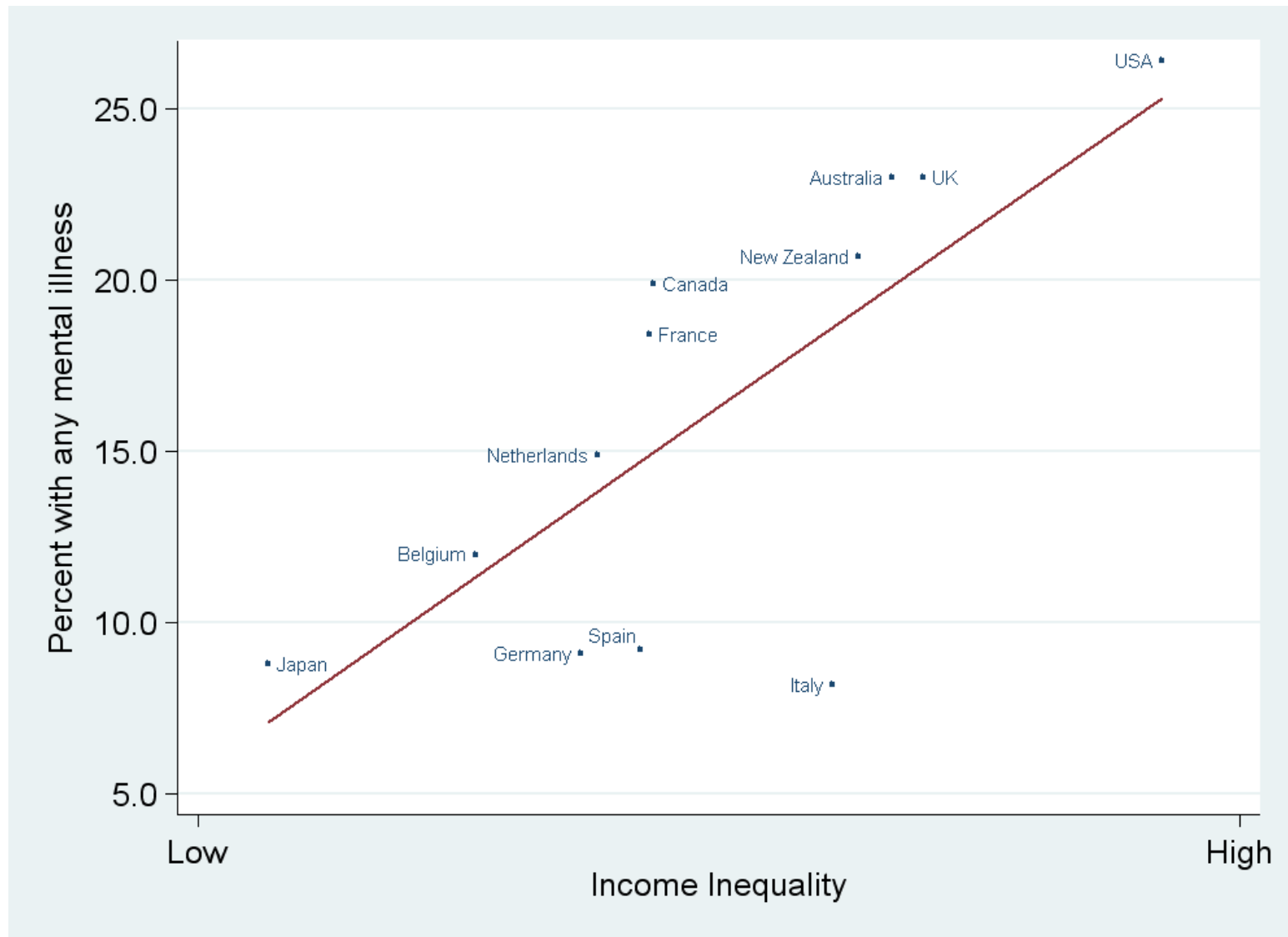
Levels of Trust are Higher in More Equal Rich Countries



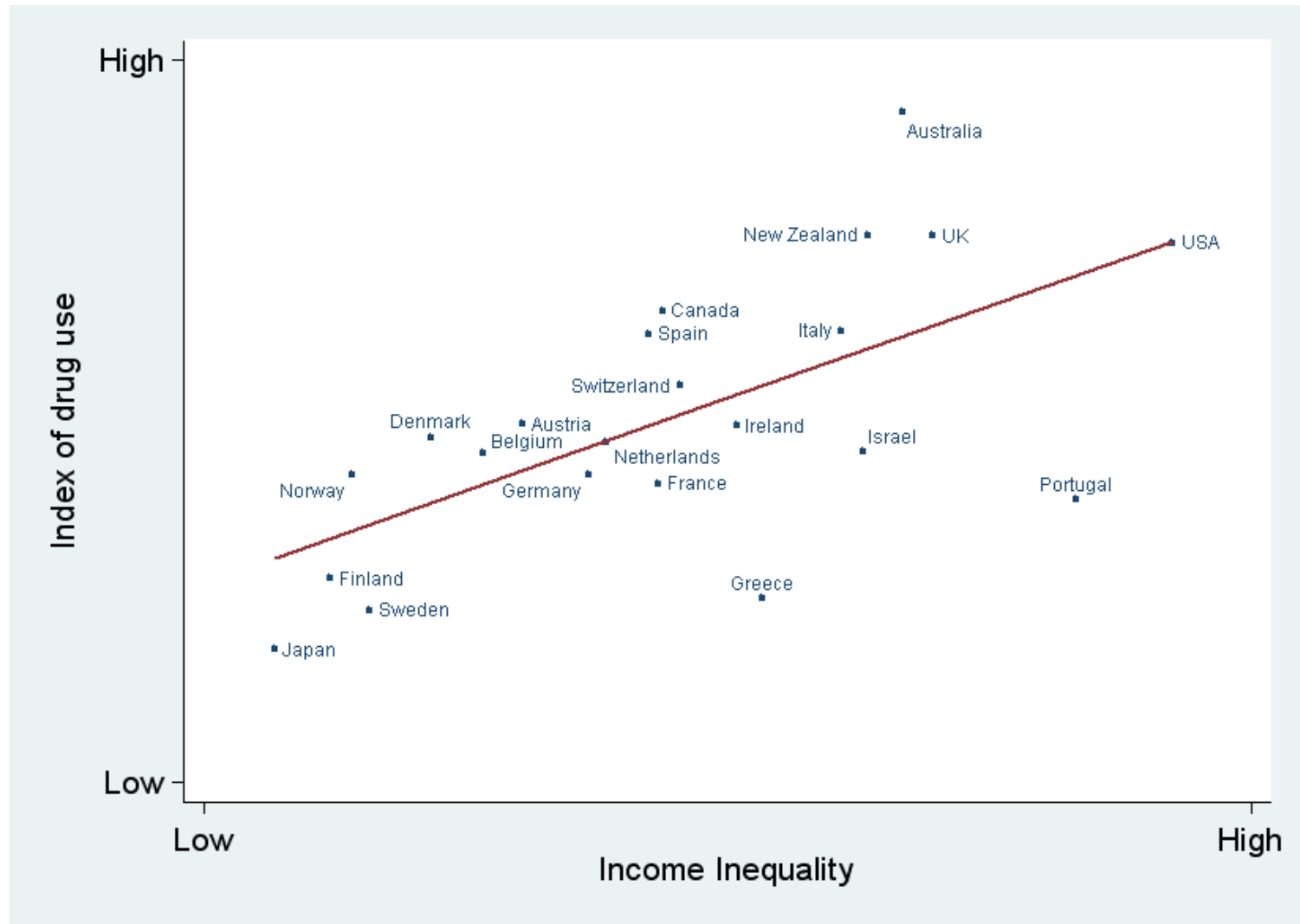
Levels of Trust are Higher in More Equal US States



The Prevalence of Mental Illness is Higher in More Unequal Rich Countries



Drug Use is More Common in More Unequal Countries

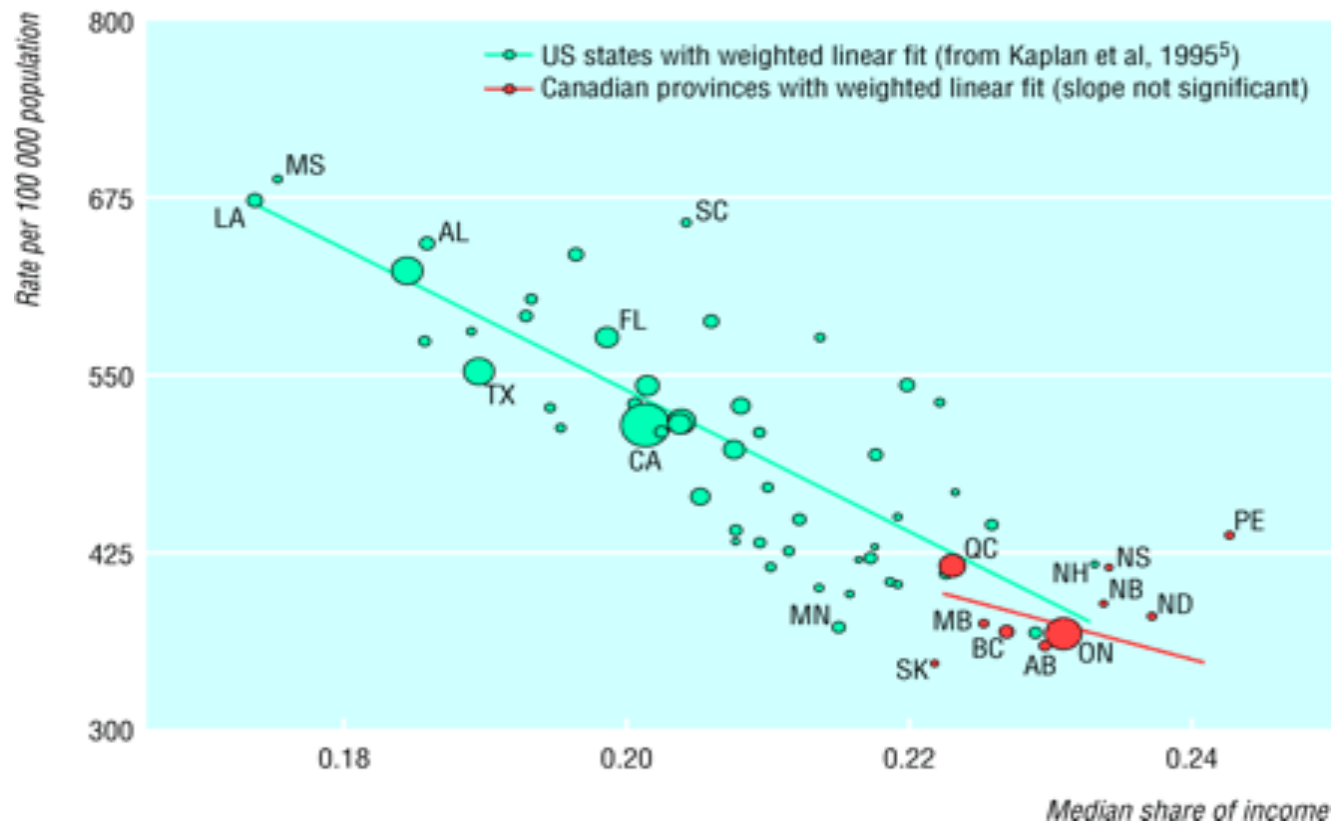


Index of use of: opiates, cocaine, cannabis, ecstasy, amphetamines

Infant Mortality Rates are Higher in More Unequal Countries



Male mortality (25-64 yrs) and income inequality in US states and Canadian provinces.



Source: Ross NA, Wolfson MC, Dunn JR, Berthelot JM, Kaplan GA, Lynch JW. *British Medical Journal* 2000;320:898-902

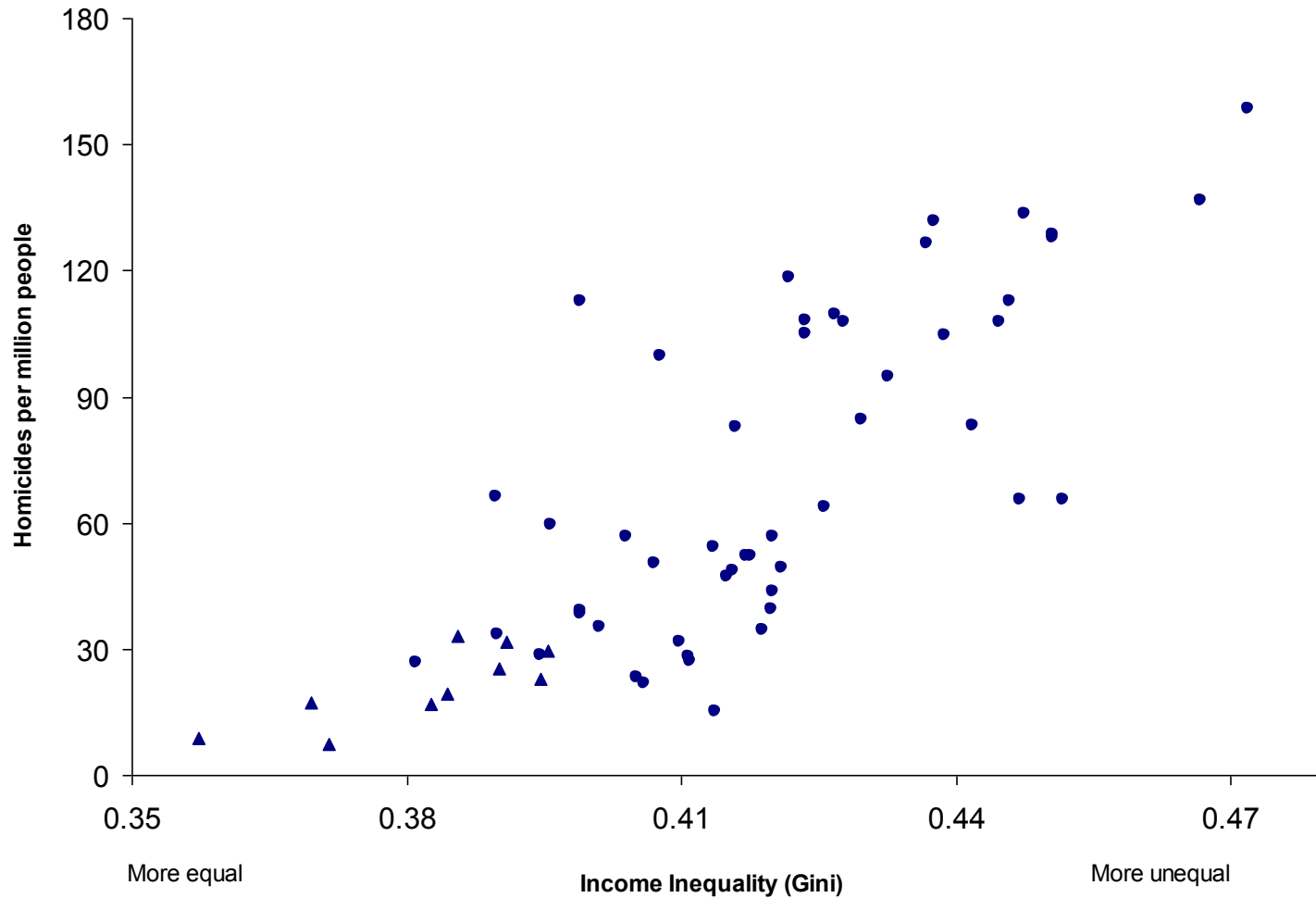
More Adults are Obese in More Unequal Rich Countries



Teenage Birth Rates are Higher in More Unequal Rich Countries

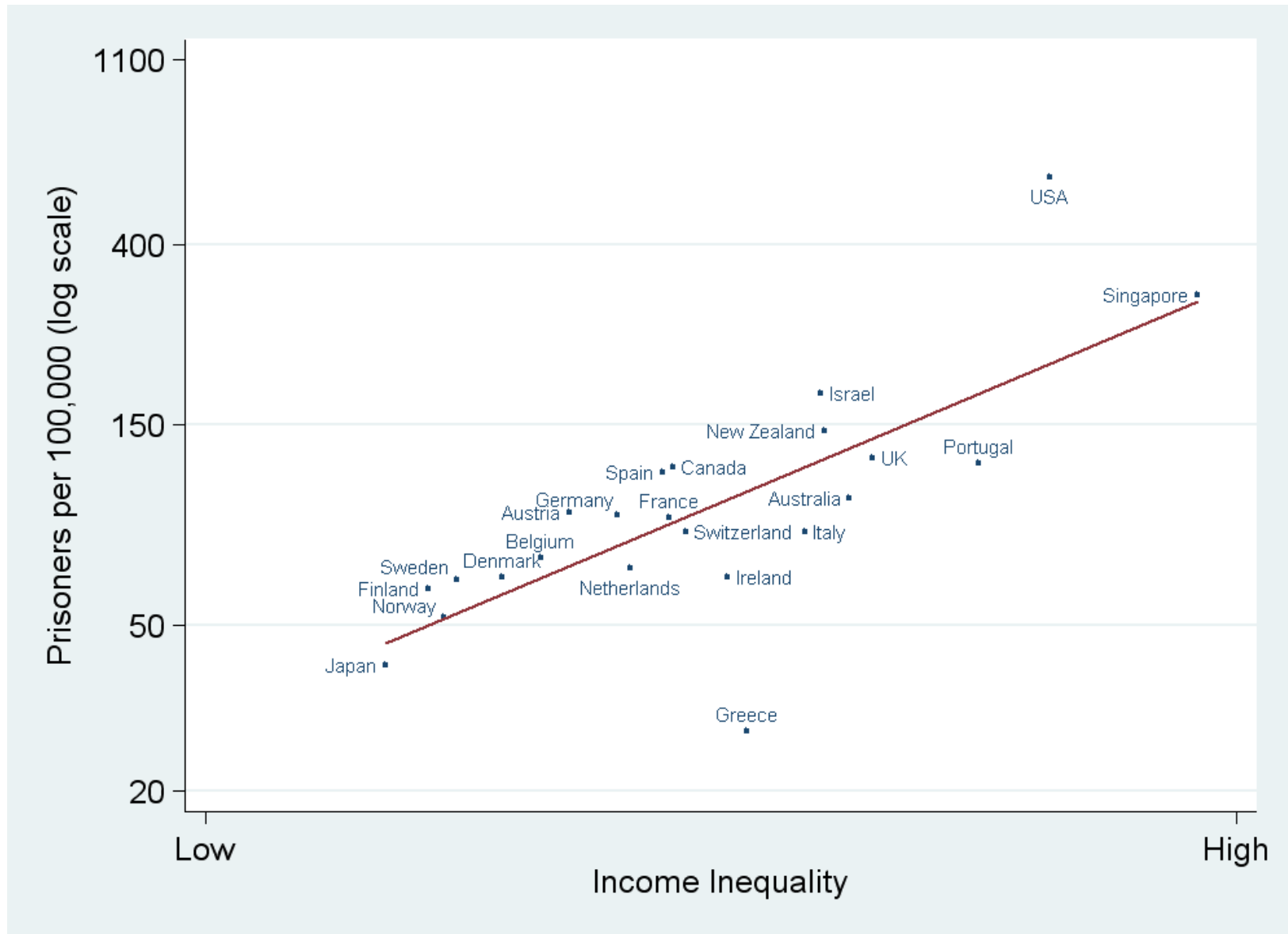


Homicide and income inequality: US States and Canadian Provinces

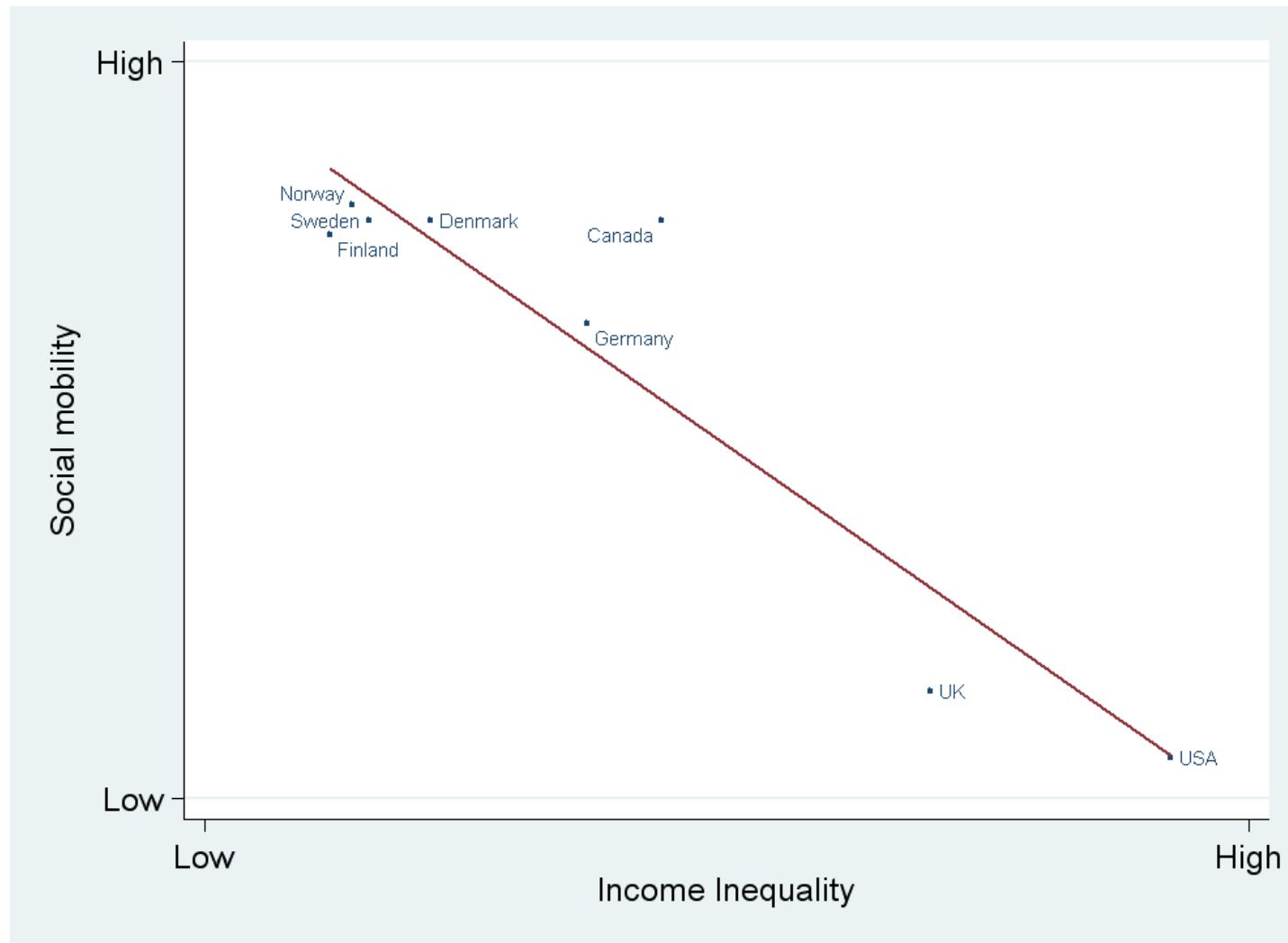


Source: Daly M, Wilson M, Vasdev S. Income inequality and homicide rates in Canada and the United States. *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 2001; 43: 219-36.

Rates of Imprisonment are Higher in More Unequal Countries



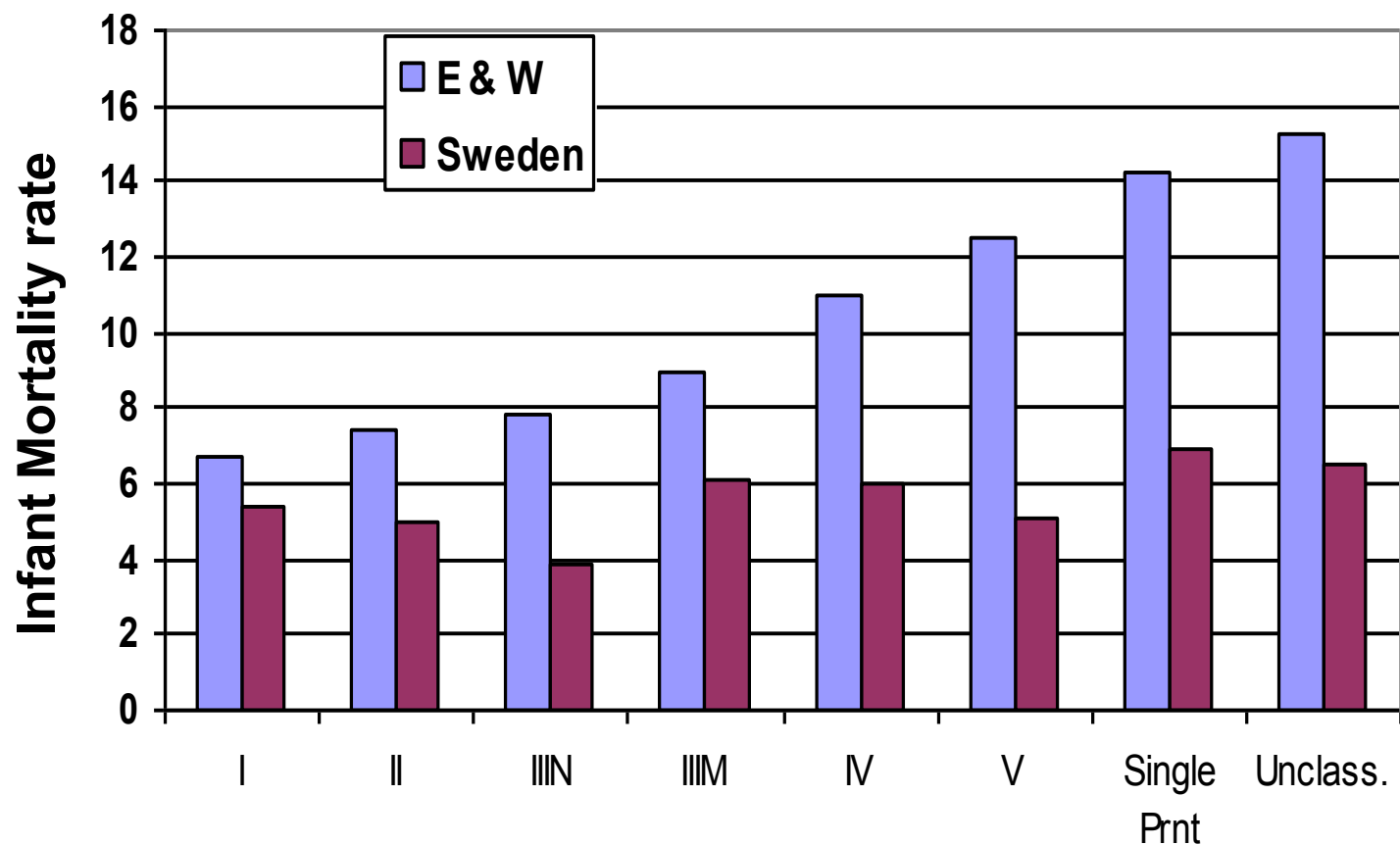
Social Mobility is Higher in More Equal Rich Countries



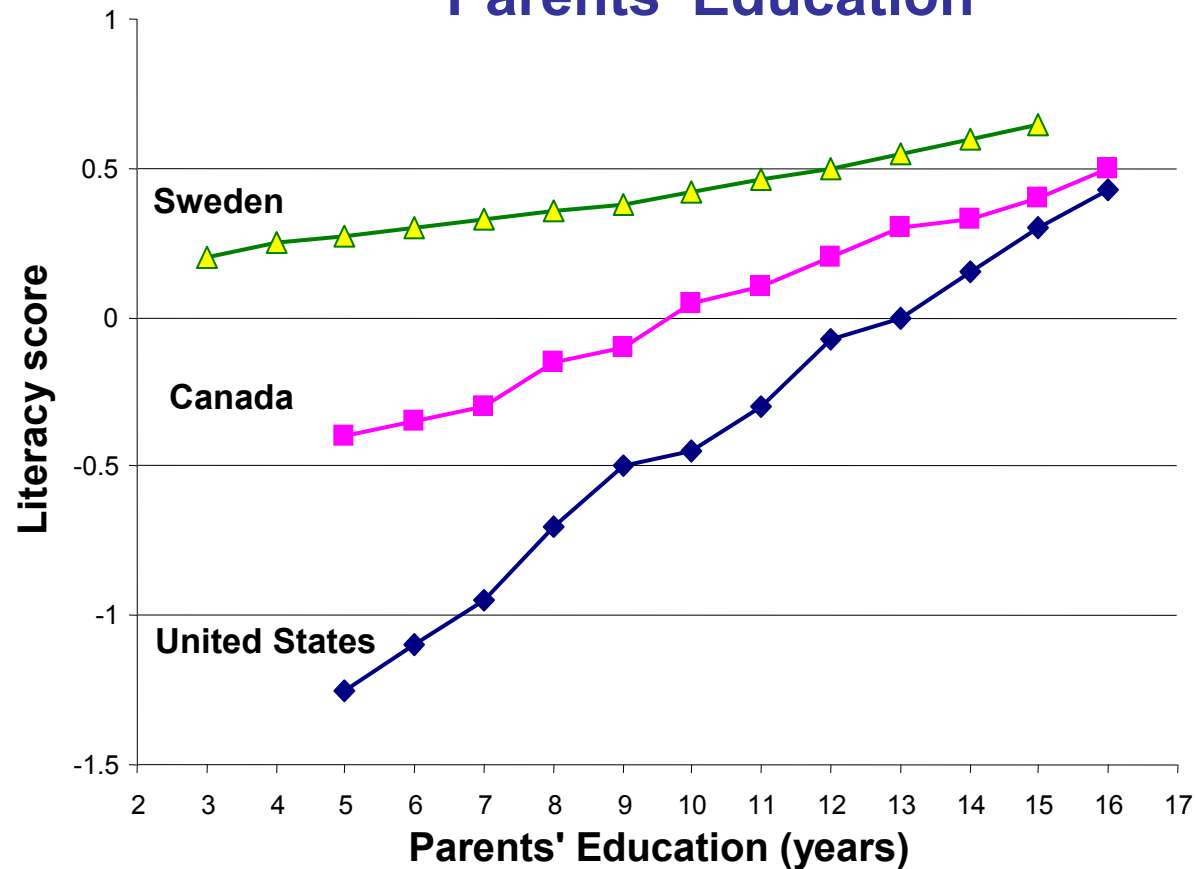
Almost everyone benefits from greater equality.

Usually the benefits are greatest among the poor but extend to the majority of the population

Infant Mortality by Social Class: Sweden and England & Wales



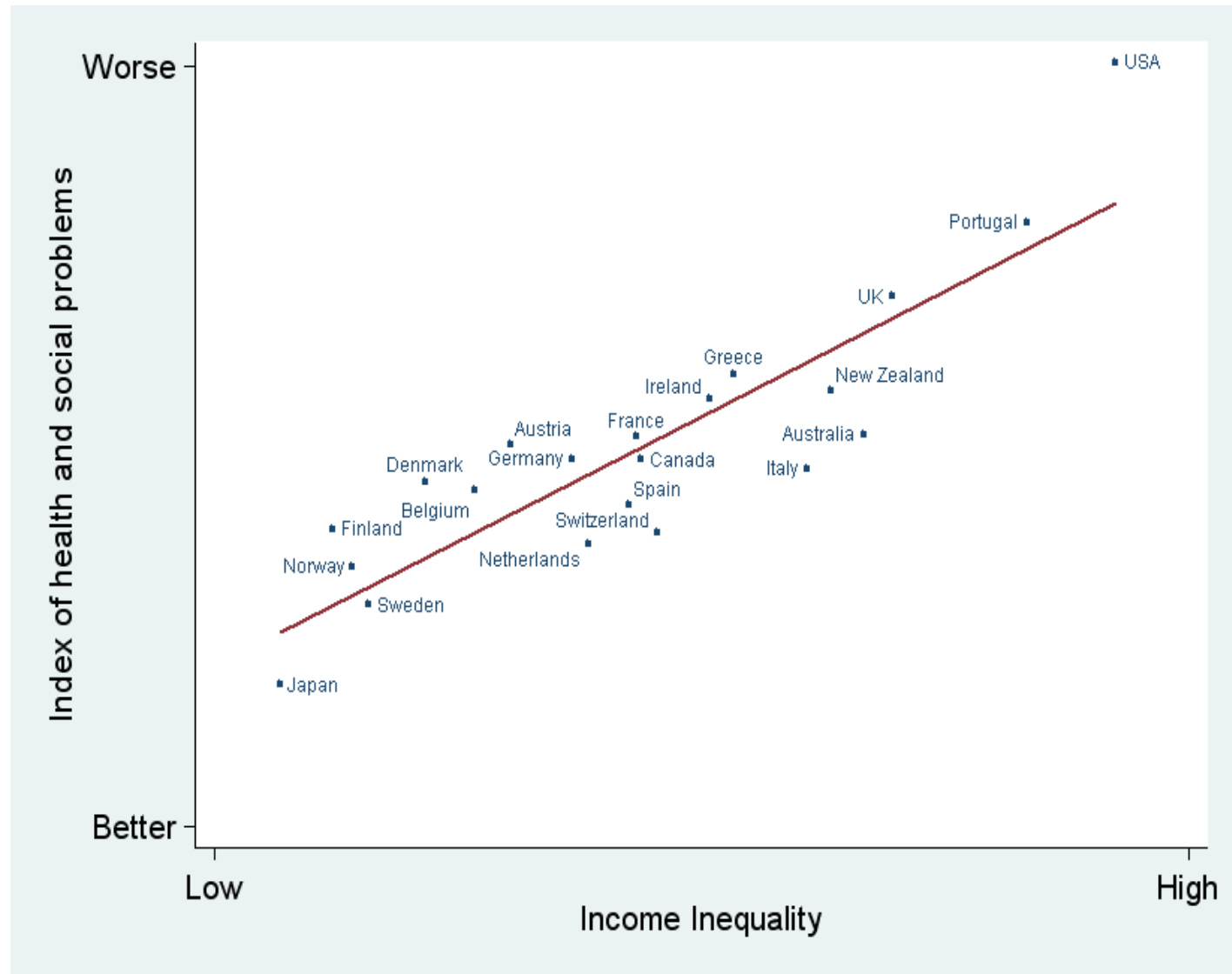
Literacy Scores of 16-25 year olds by Parents' Education



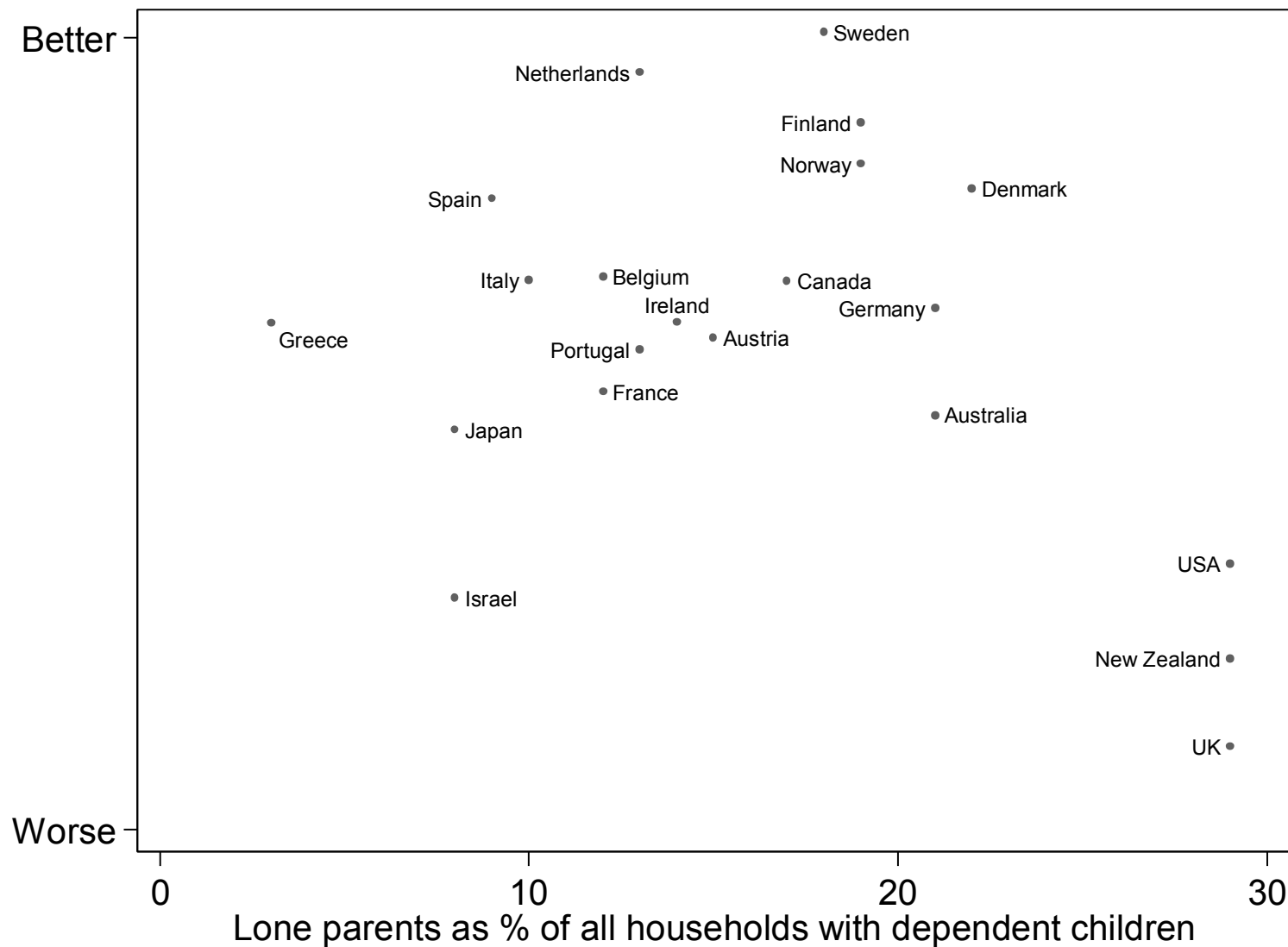
Health and Social Problems are Worse in More Unequal Countries

Index of:

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



Single parents and child wellbeing

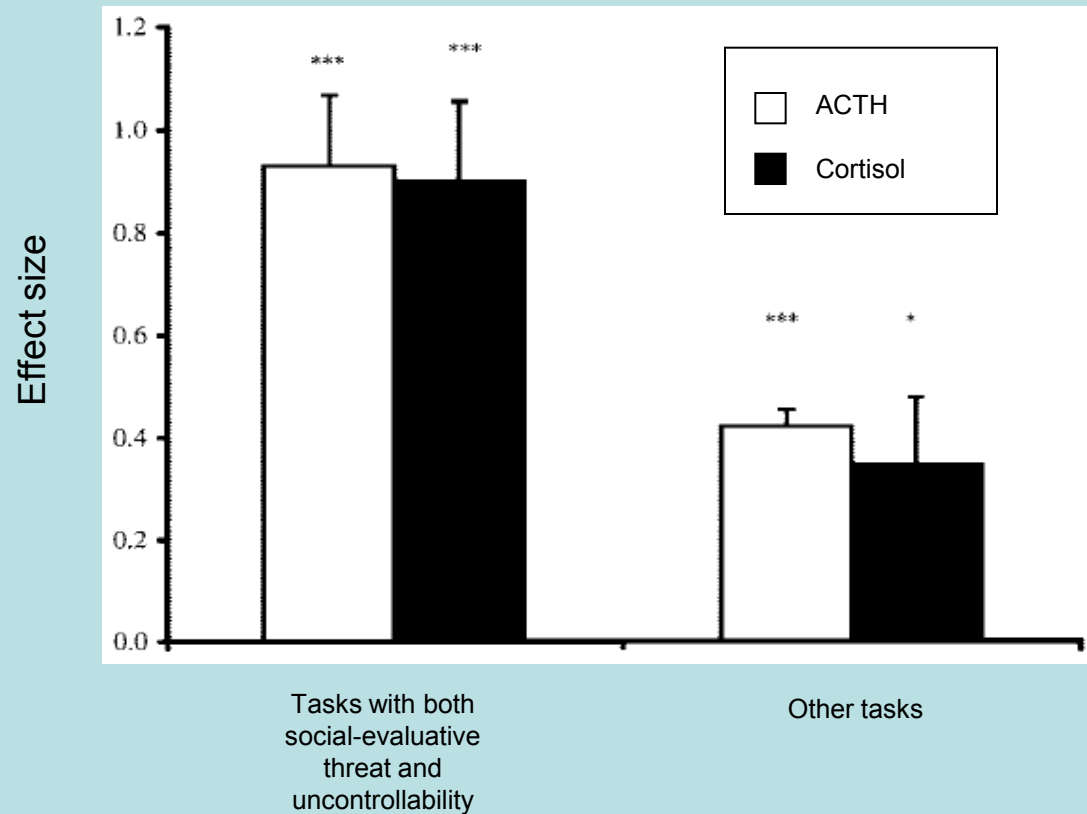


Why are we so sensitive to inequality?

Psychosocial risk factors for ill health

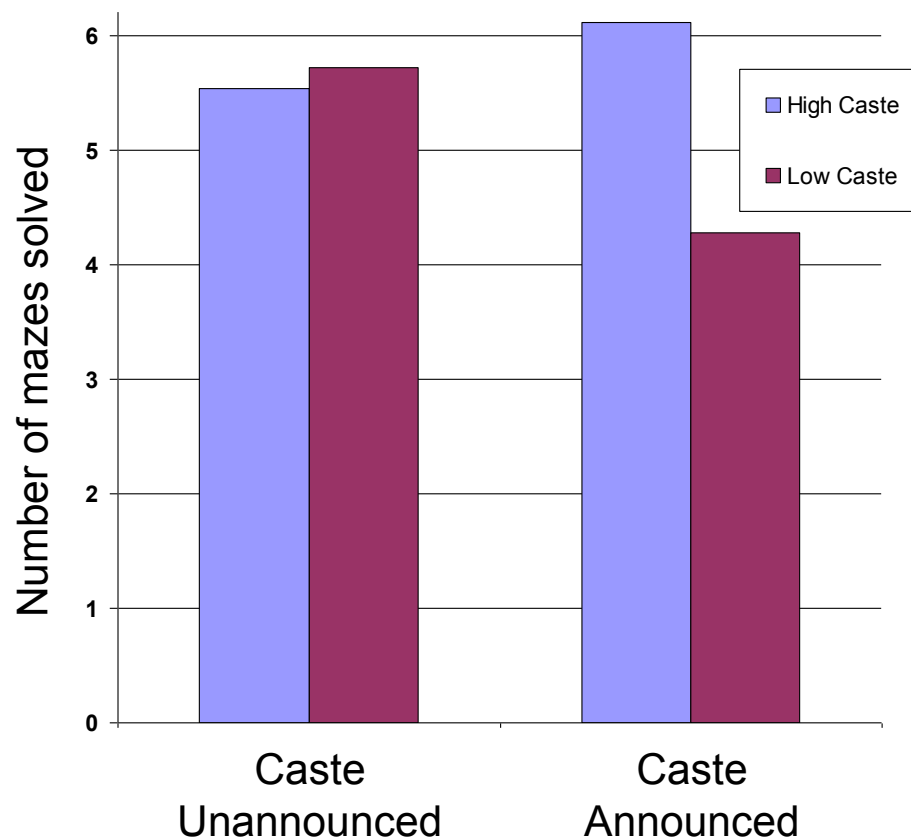
- **Low social status**
- **Weak social affiliations**
- **Stress in early life (pre- and postnatally)**

What kind of stress most reliably raises cortisol levels?



Stereotype Threat

The effect of caste identity on children's performance



Gilligan J. *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and its Causes.*

(G .P. Putnam 1996)

" ...the prison inmates I work with have told me repeatedly, when I asked them why they had assaulted someone, that it was because 'he disrespected me', or 'he disrespected my visit' (meaning 'visitor'). The word 'disrespect' is central in the vocabulary, moral value system, and psychodynamics of these chronically violent men that they have abbreviated it into the slang term, 'he dis'ed me.'" p.106

A few pages further on Gilligan continues:-

"I have yet to see a serious act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed, and that did not represent the attempt to prevent or undo this "loss of face " - no matter how severe the punishment, even if it includes death." p.110

The effects of inequality - a two stage process

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

Inequality and Sustainability

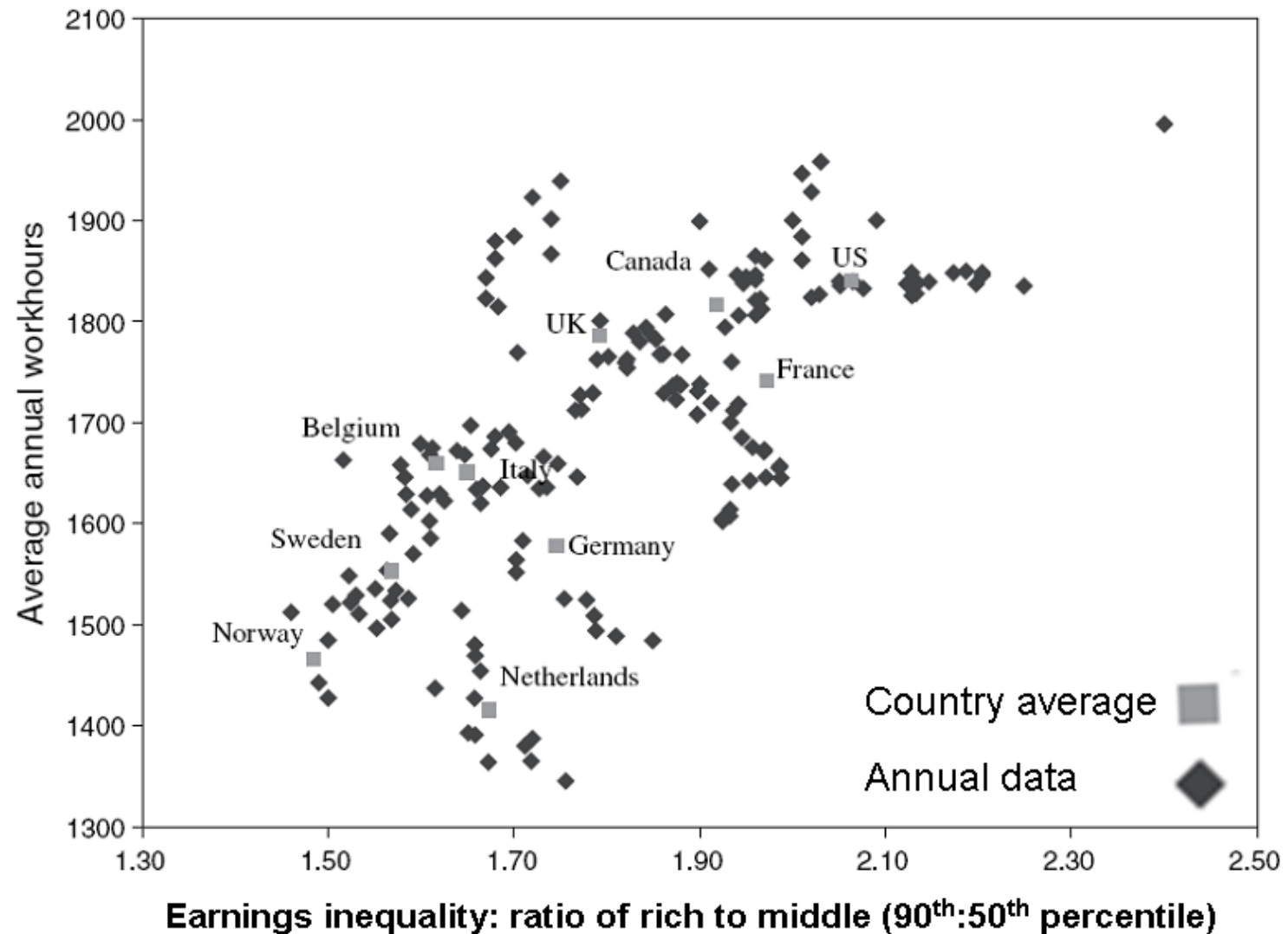
Consumerism is one of the greatest threats to sustainability

Because inequality increases status competition, it also increases consumerism. People in more unequal societies work longer hours because money seems even more important.

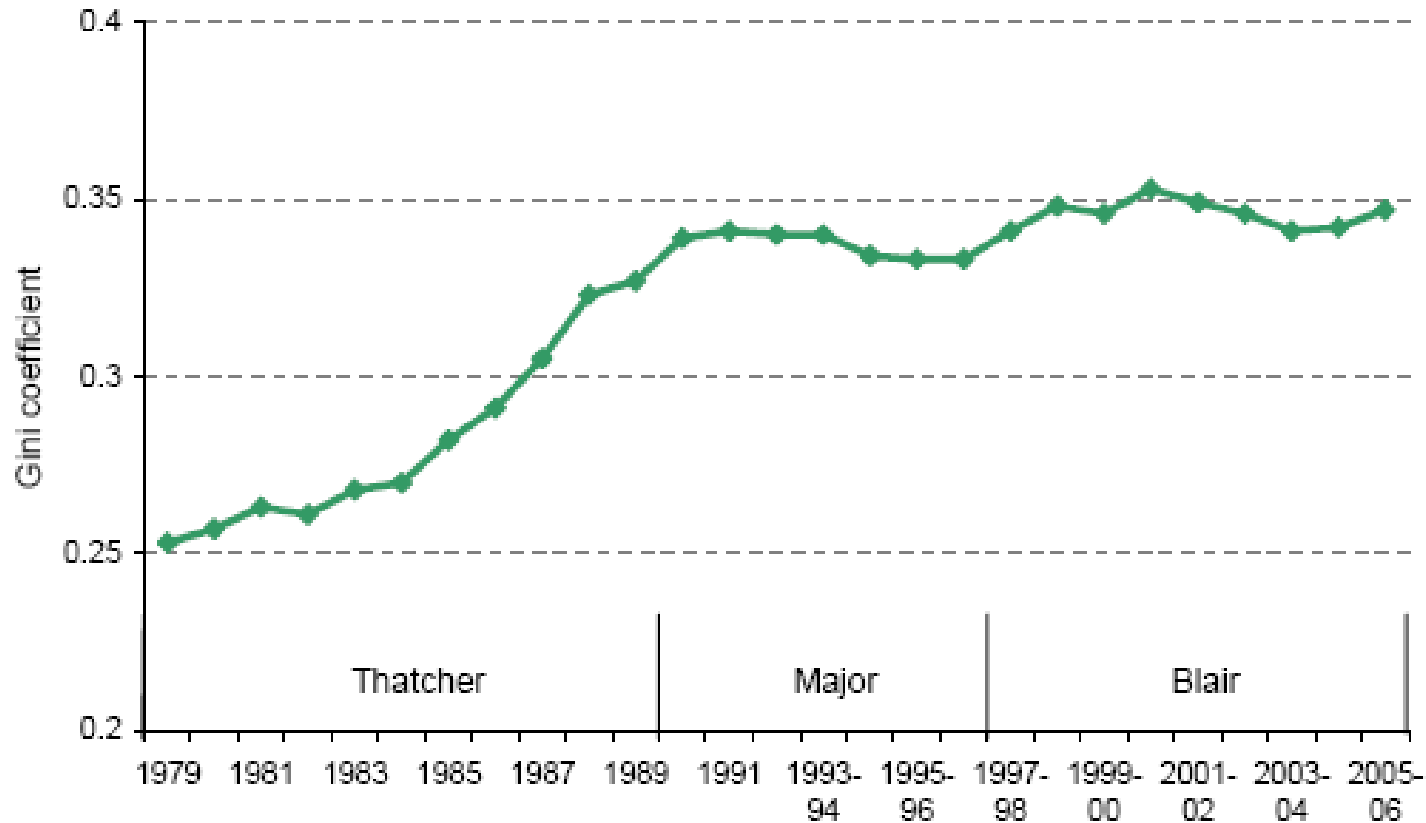
Concern for the common good is a crucial resource if we are to reduce carbon emissions

Because inequality harms the quality of social relations (increasing violence, reducing trust, cohesion and involvement in community life), people become more self-interested, less public spirited, less concerned with the common good. This is shown in the amount of overseas aid countries give, in the proportion of waste recycled, in how countries score on the global peace index, and in how important business leaders think it is that their governments abide by international environmental agreements.

Working hours are longer in more unequal countries



Trends in income inequality 1979-2005/6 (Gini coefficient, Great Britain.)



Brewer M, Goodman A, Muriel A, Sibieta L. *Poverty and Inequality in the UK: 2007*. Institute of Fiscal Studies, London.



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>