



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

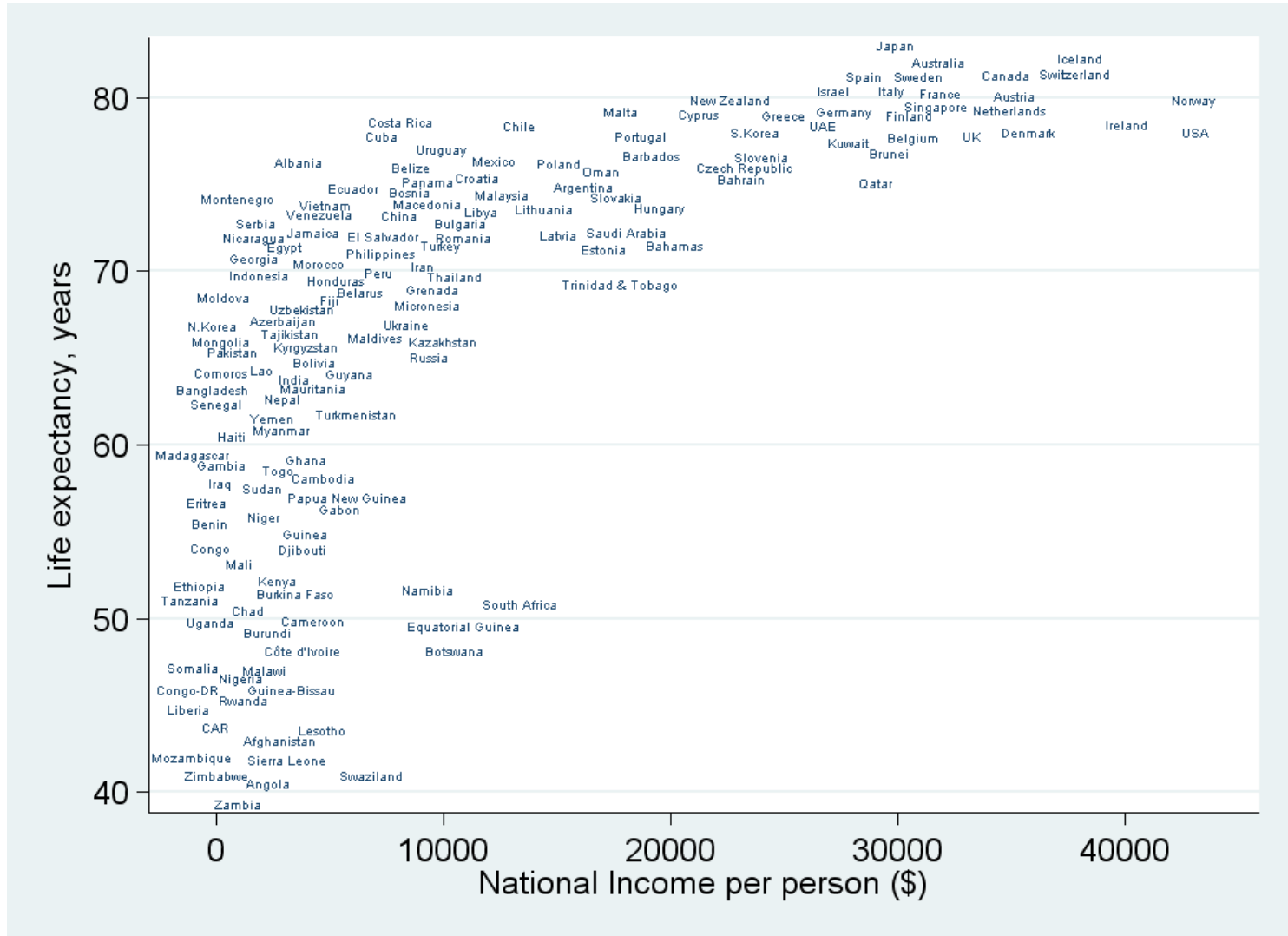
&

Kate Pickett

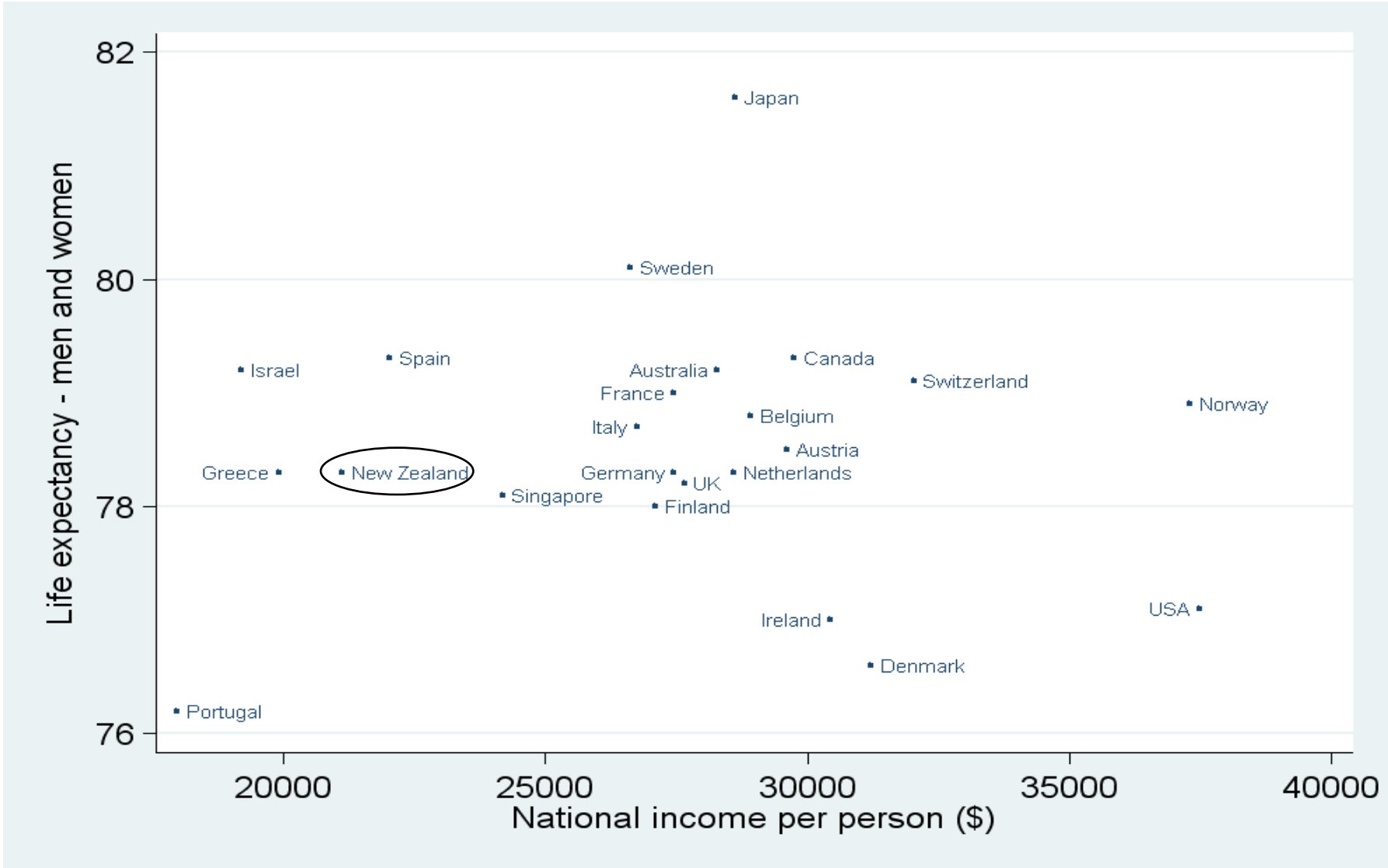
Professor of Epidemiology
University of York

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

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

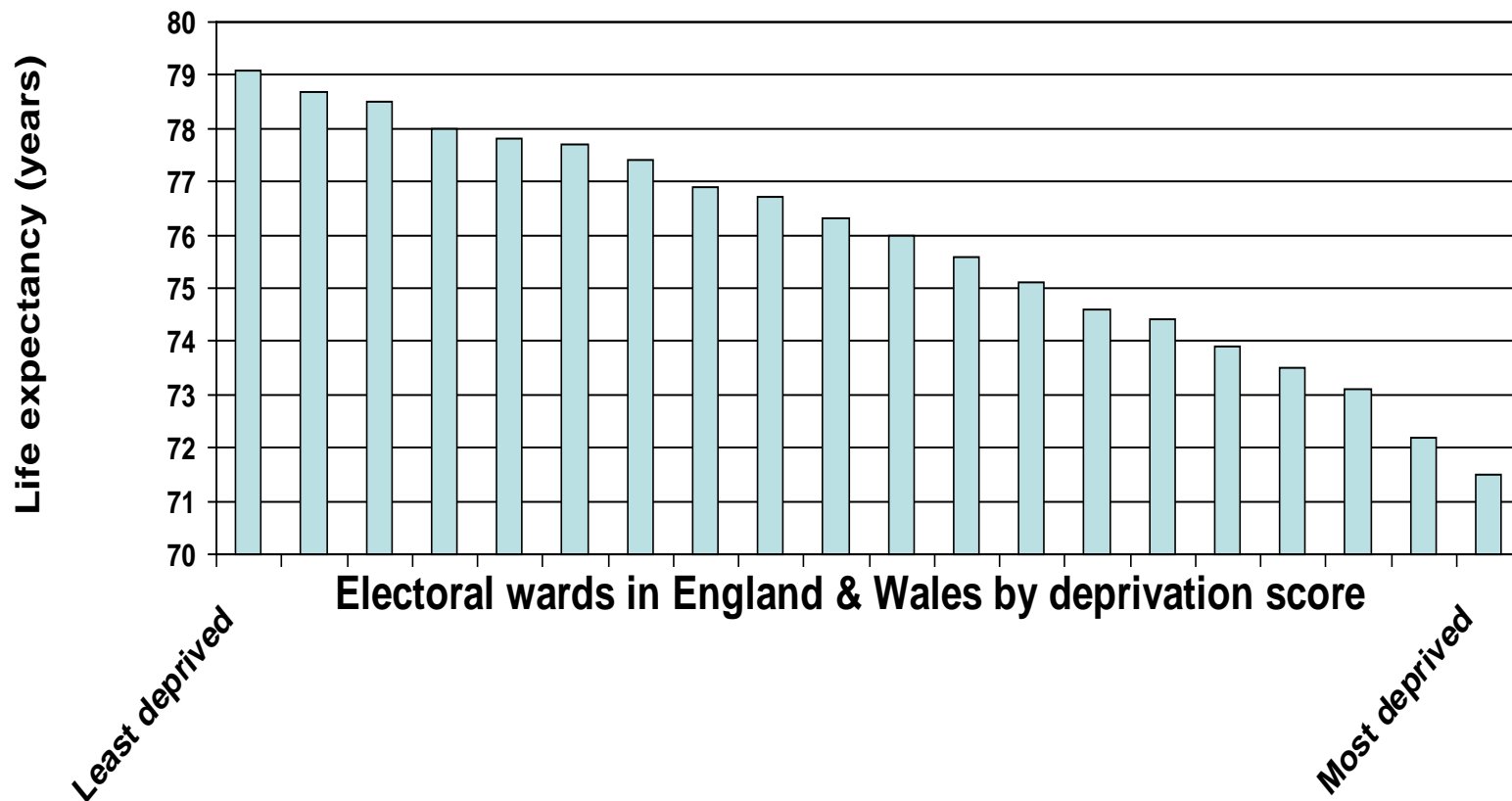


Among the rich countries life expectancy is not related to national differences in average income



Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

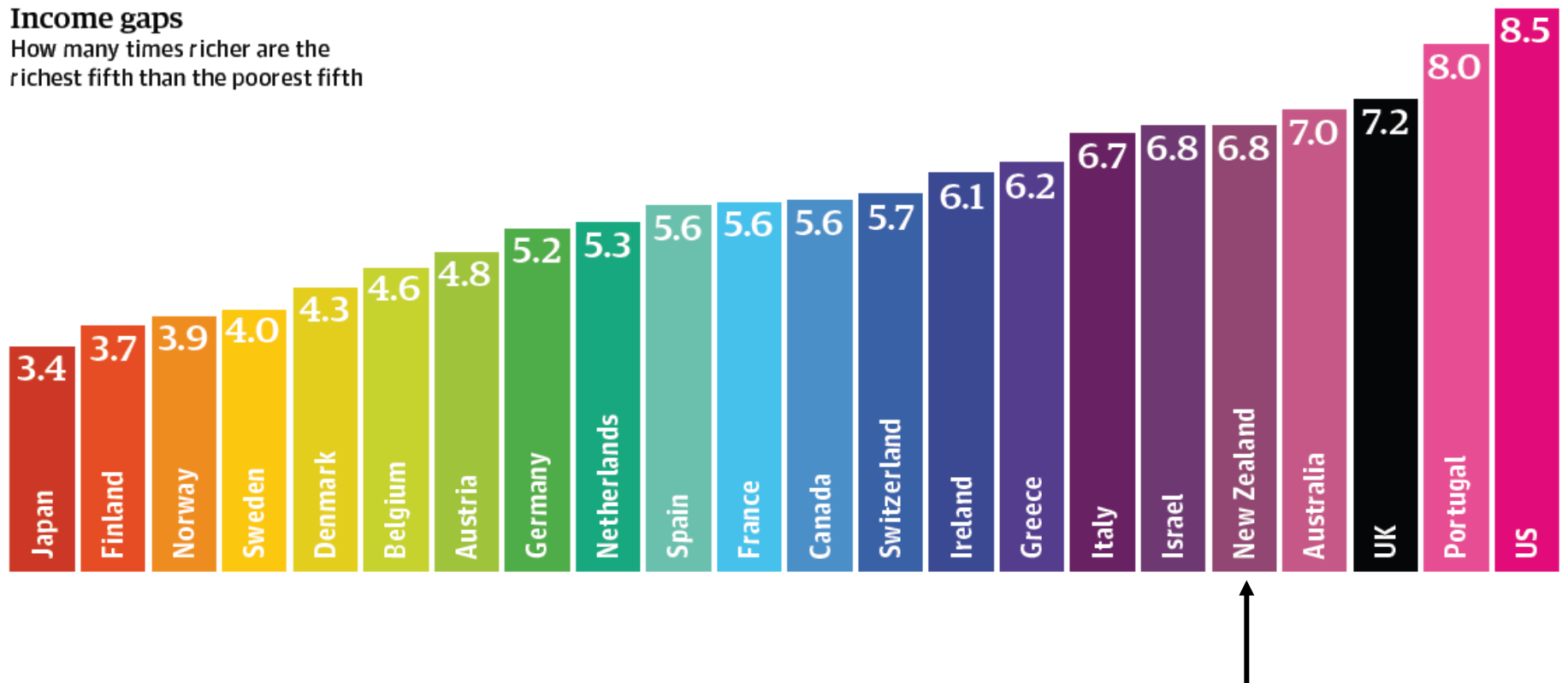
...but life expectancy is related to income differences *within* rich societies



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

Income gaps

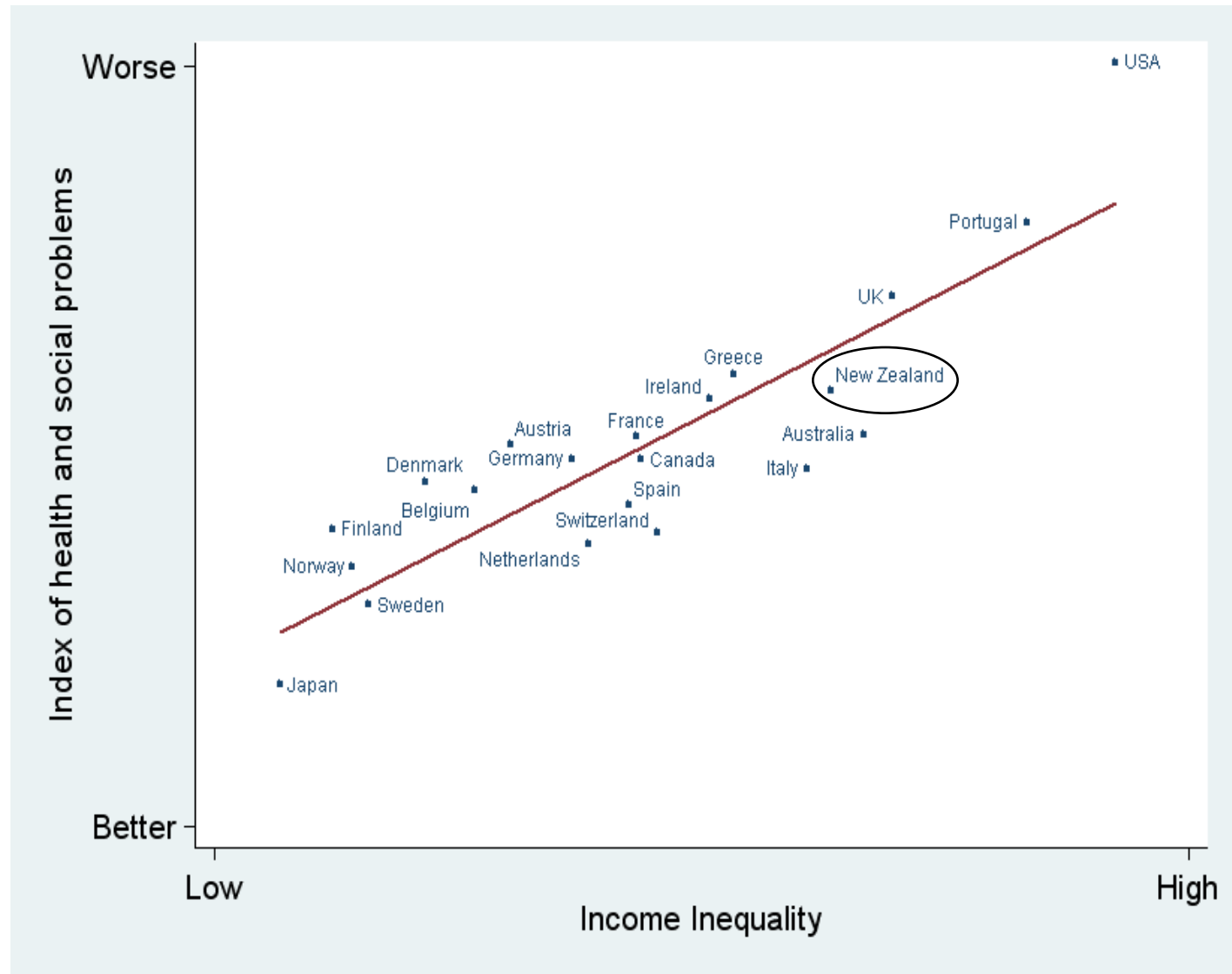
How many times richer are the richest fifth than the poorest fifth



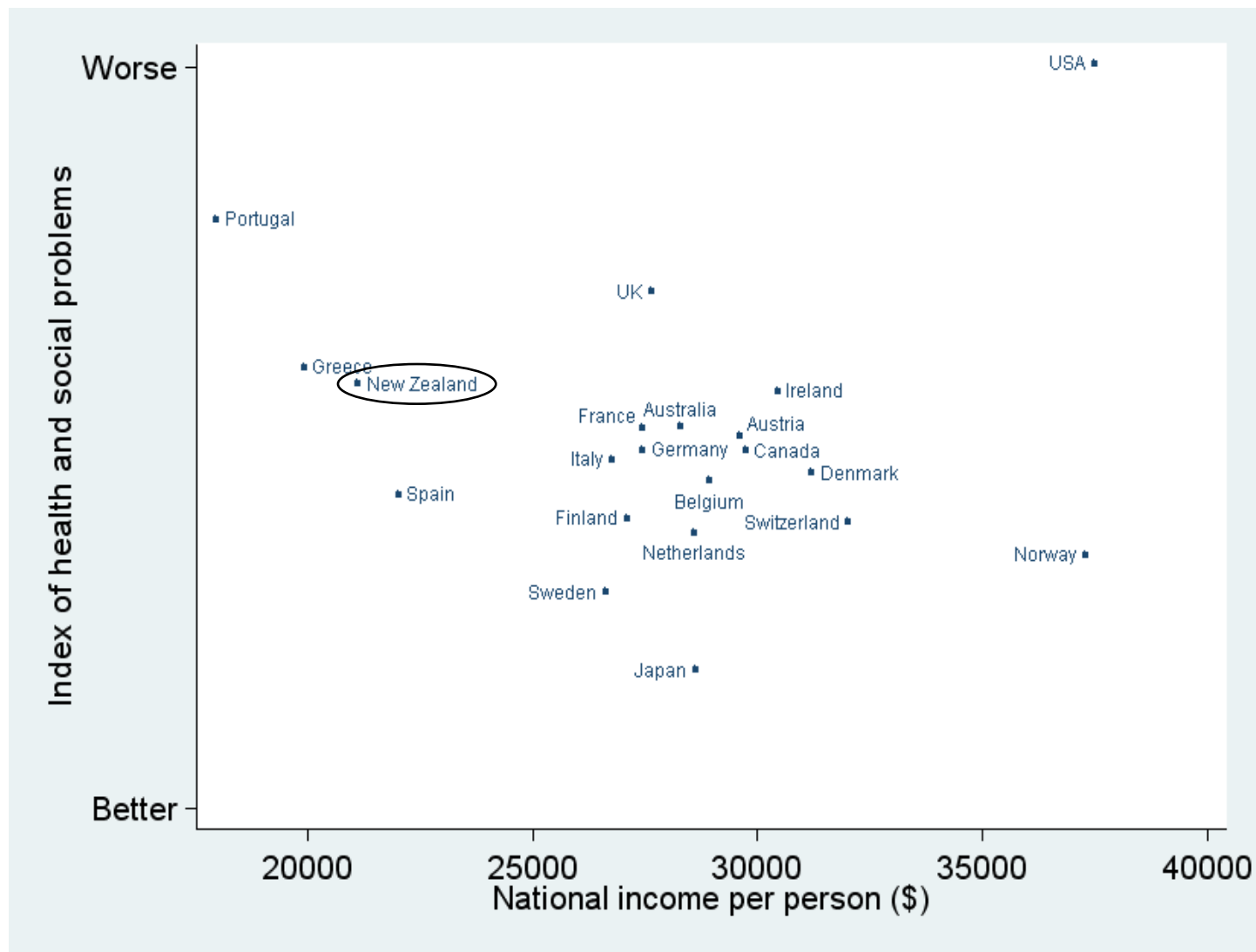
Health and Social Problems are Worse in More Unequal Countries

Index of:

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



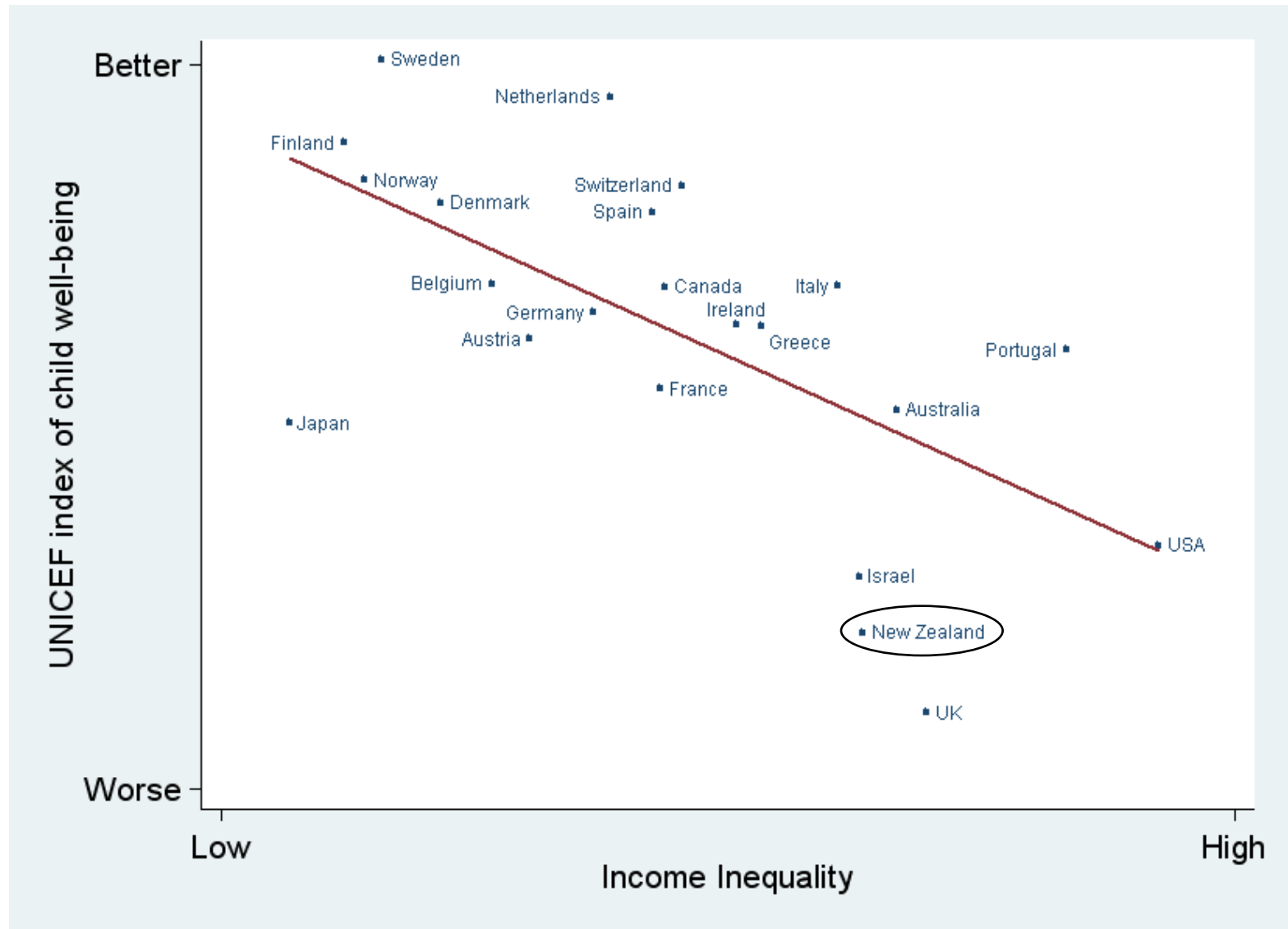
Health and Social Problems are not Related to Average Income in Rich Countries



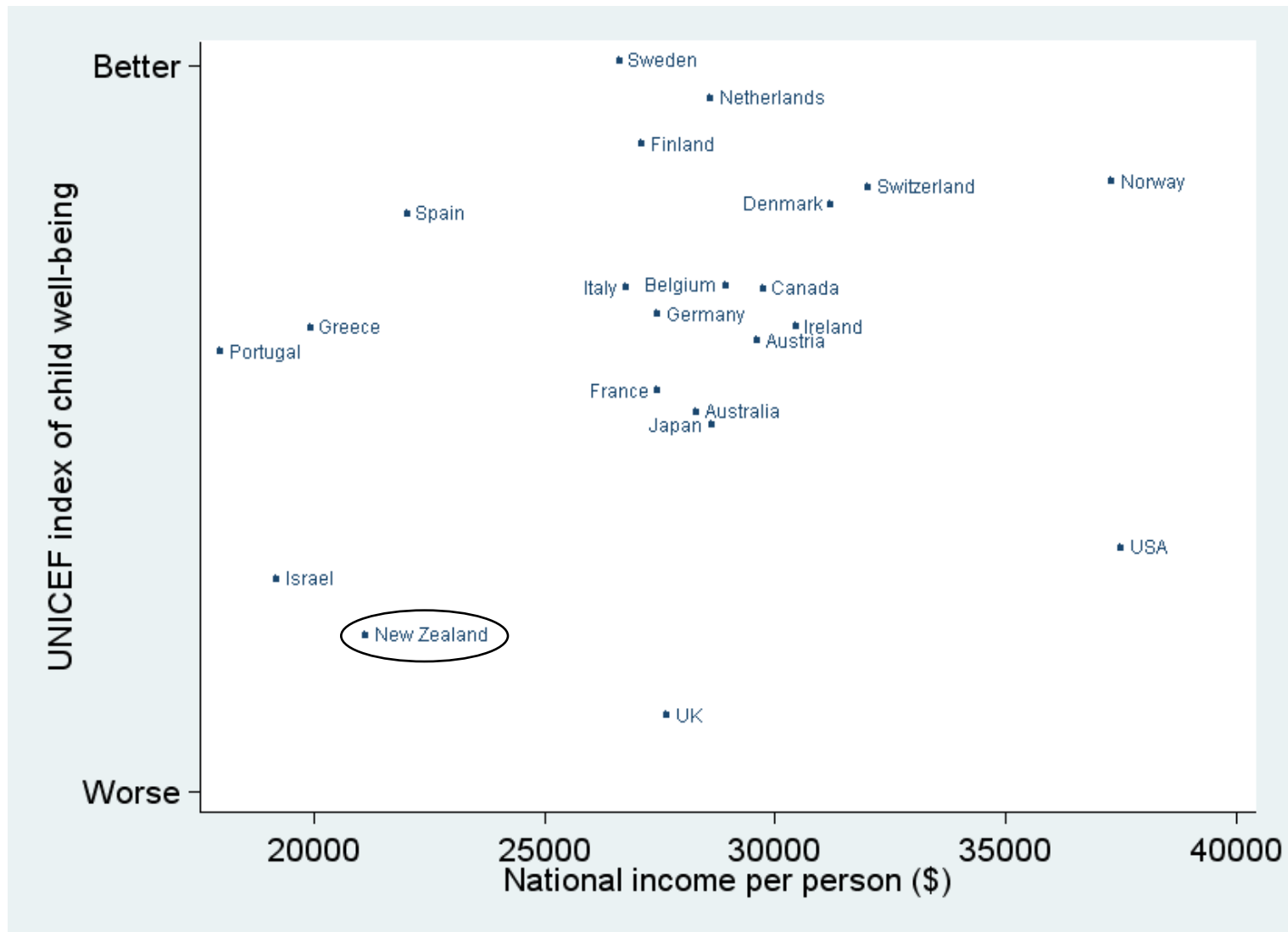
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Child Well-being is Better in More Equal Rich Countries



Child-Wellbeing is Unrelated to Average Incomes in Rich Countries

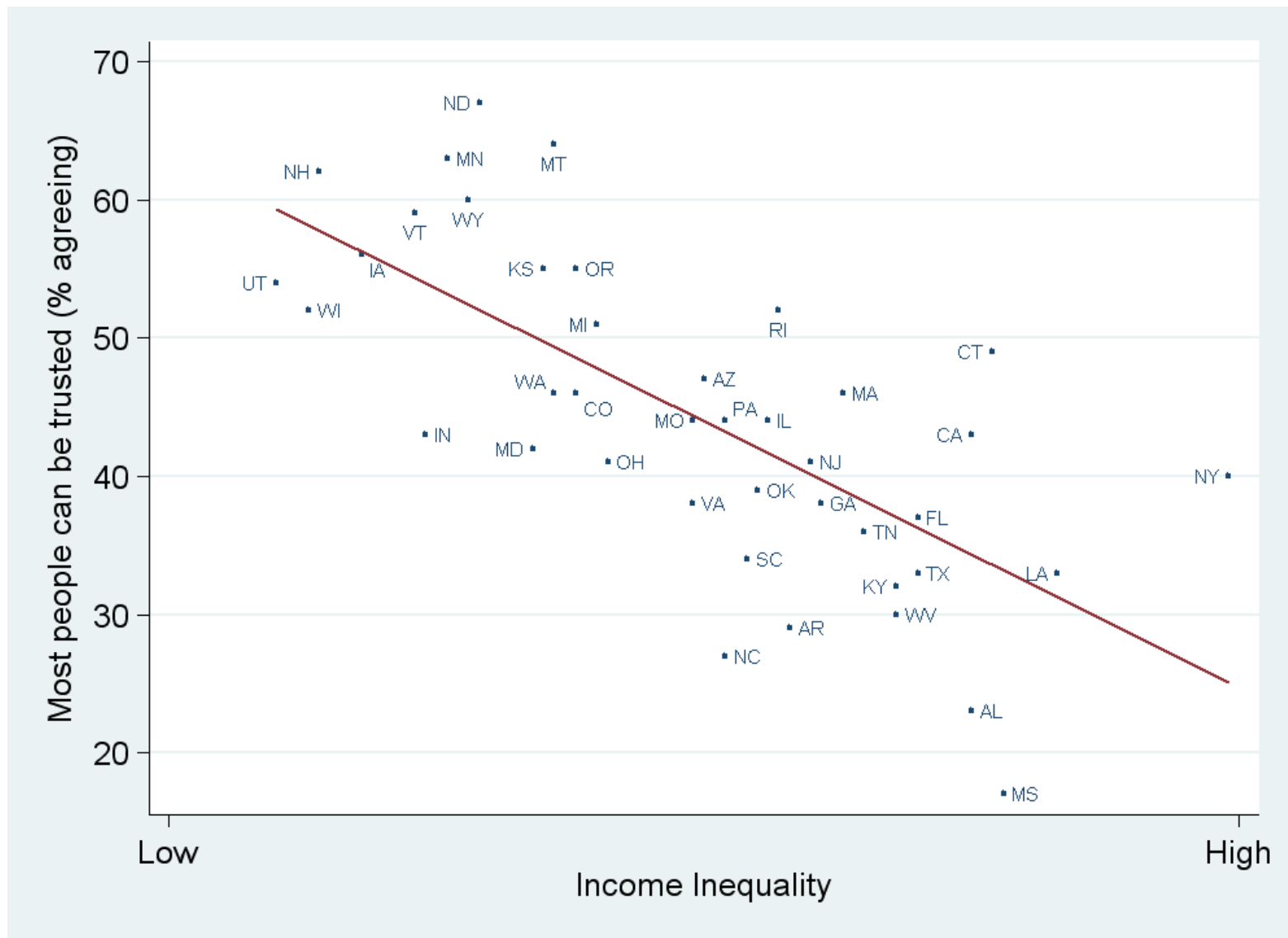


Levels of Trust are Higher in More Equal Rich Countries

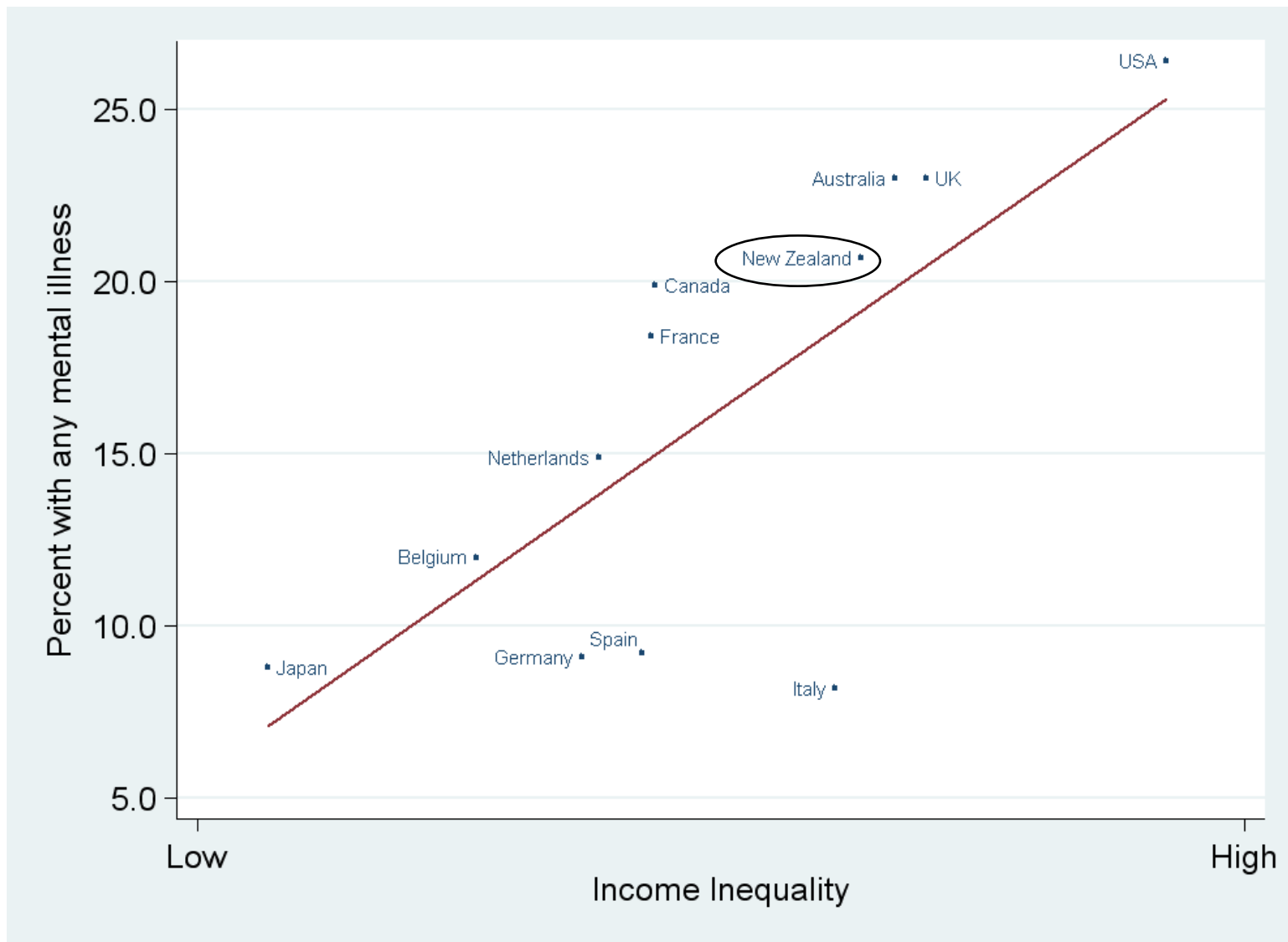


Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

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

Educational Scores are Higher in More Equal Rich Countries



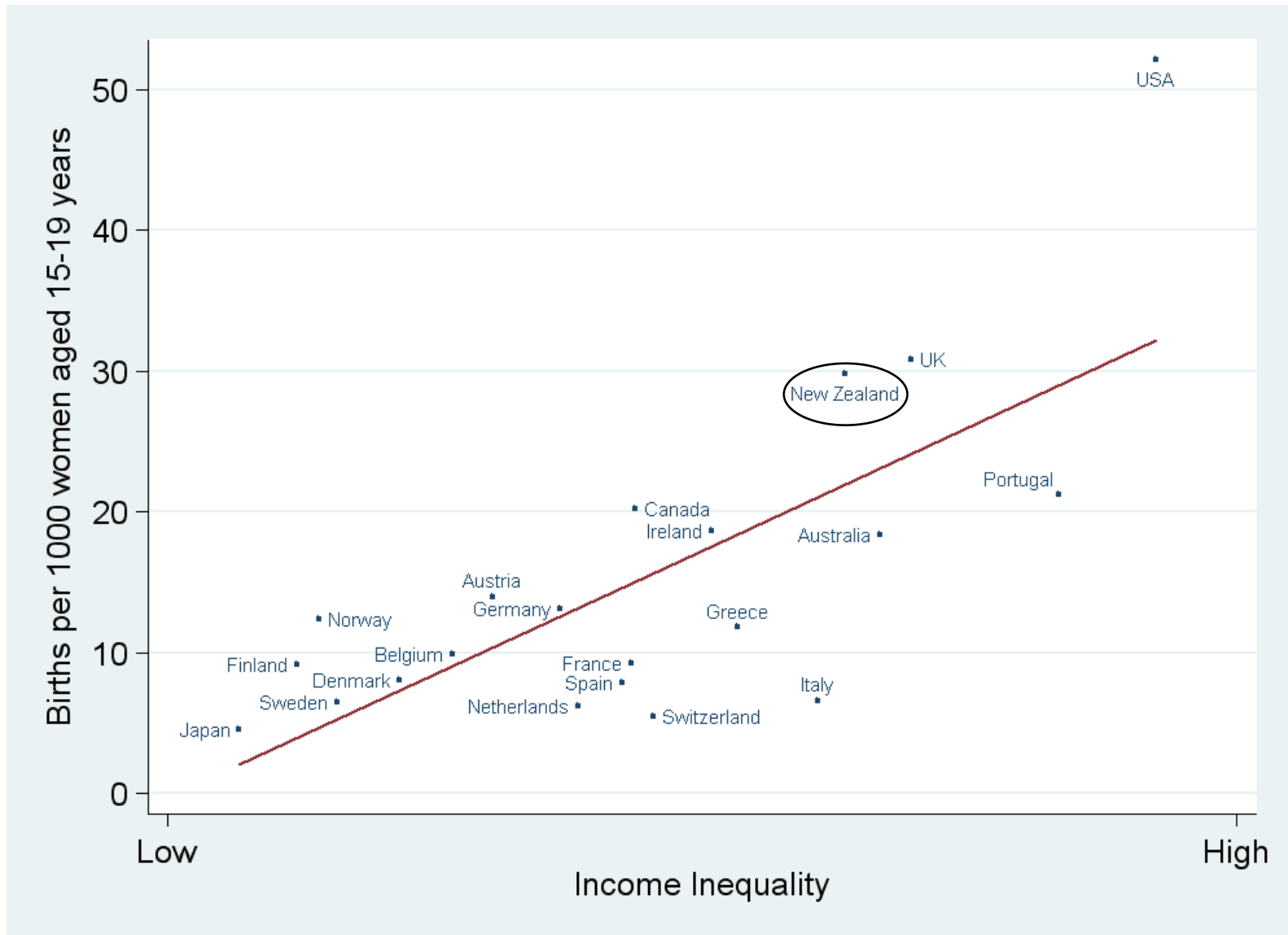
Infant Mortality Rates are Higher in More Unequal Countries



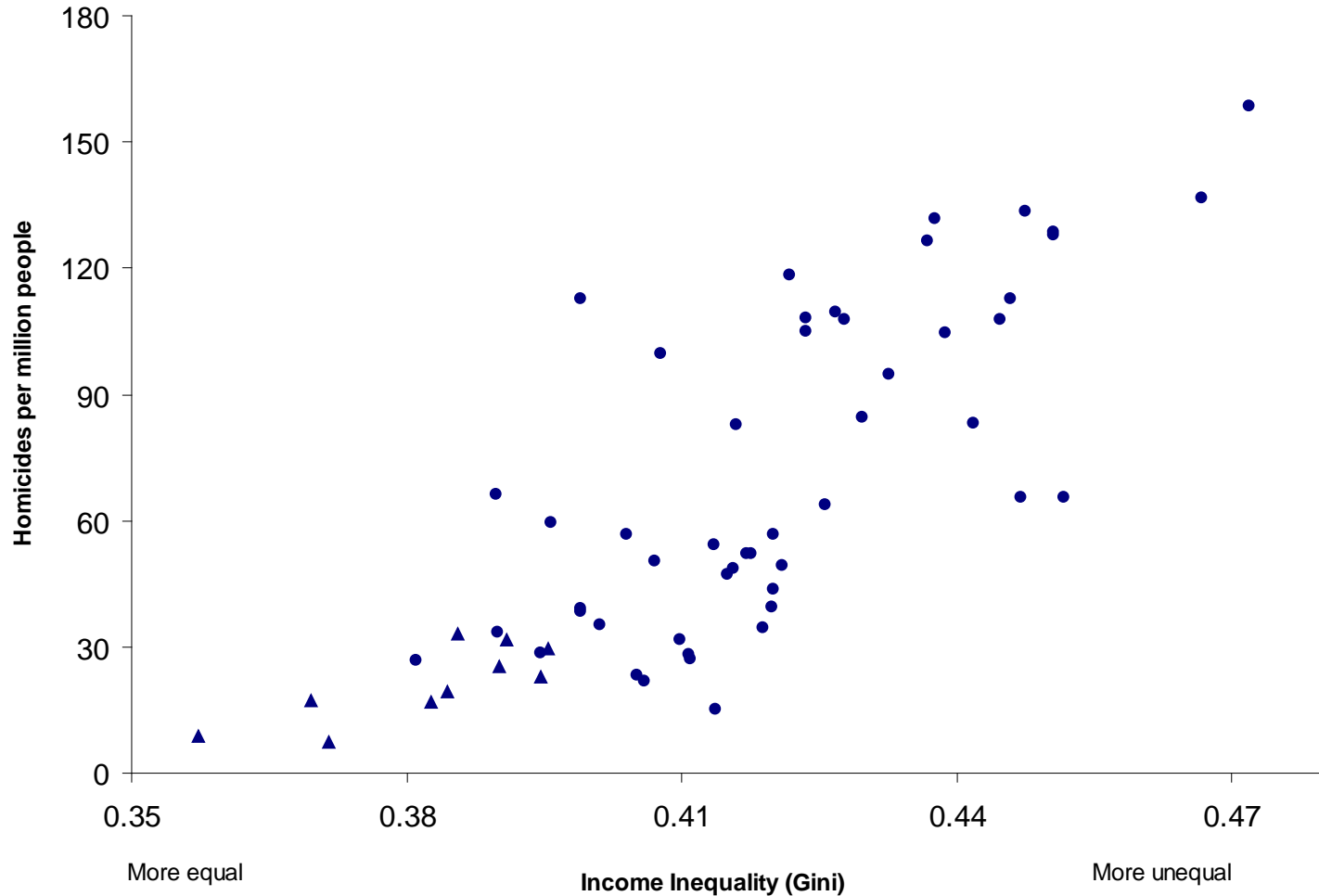
Life Expectancy is Longer in More Equal Rich Countries



Teenage Birth Rates are Higher in More Unequal Rich Countries

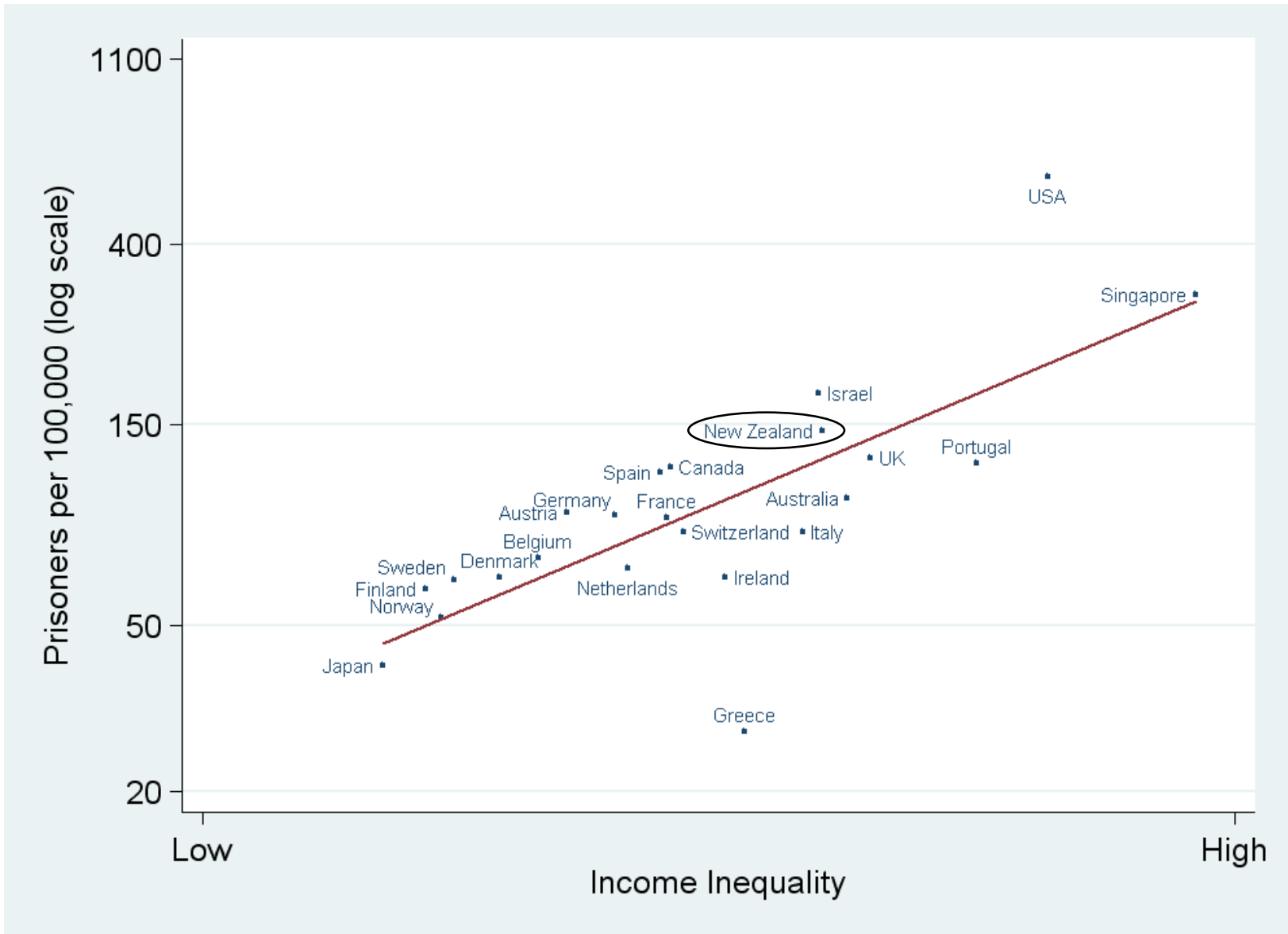


Homicide and income inequality: US States and Canadian Provinces

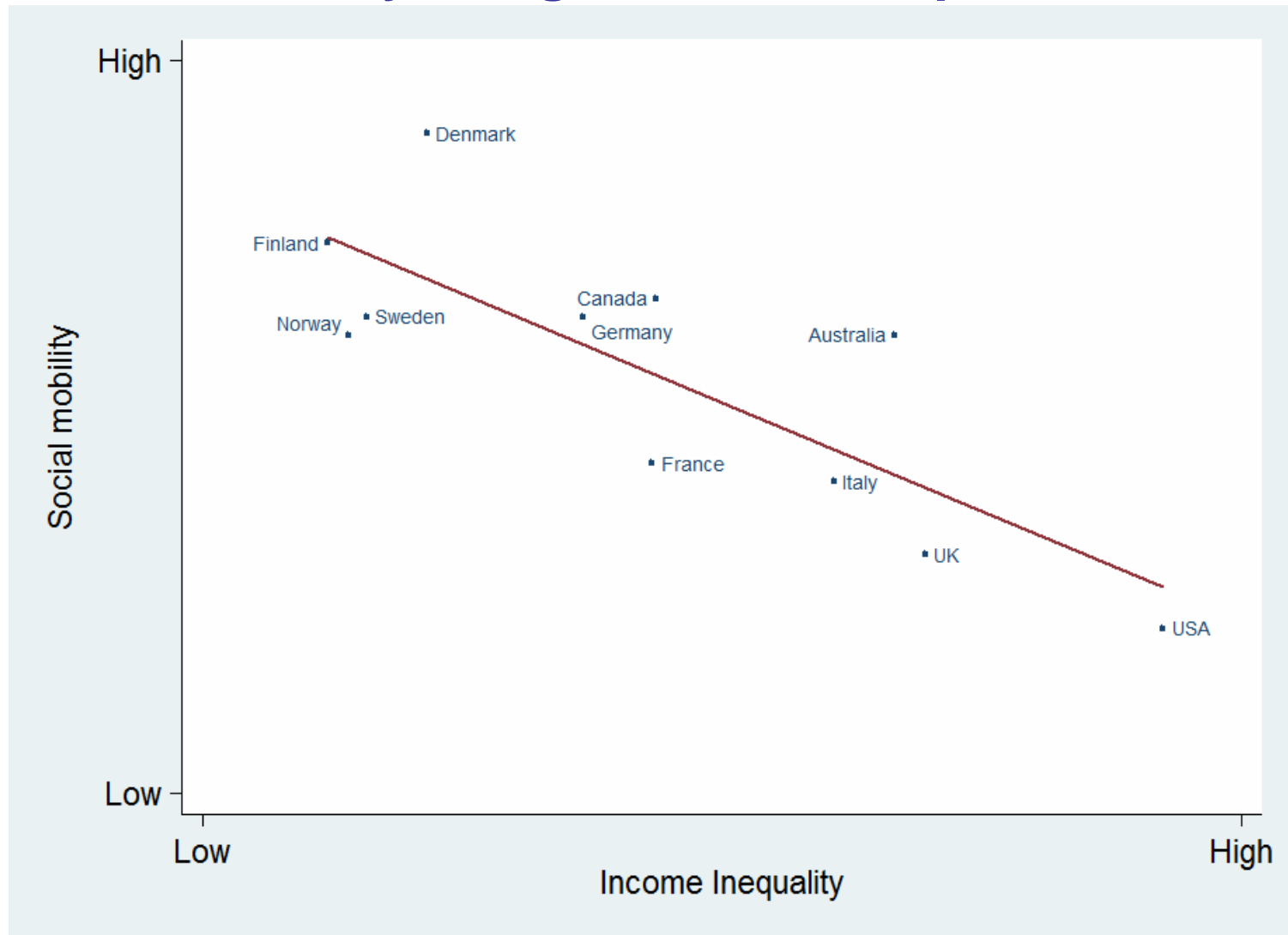


Source: Daly M, Wilson M, Vasdev S. Income inequality and homicide rates in Canada and the United States. *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 2001; 43: 219-36.

Rates of Imprisonment are Higher in More Unequal Countries



Social mobility is higher in more equal countries

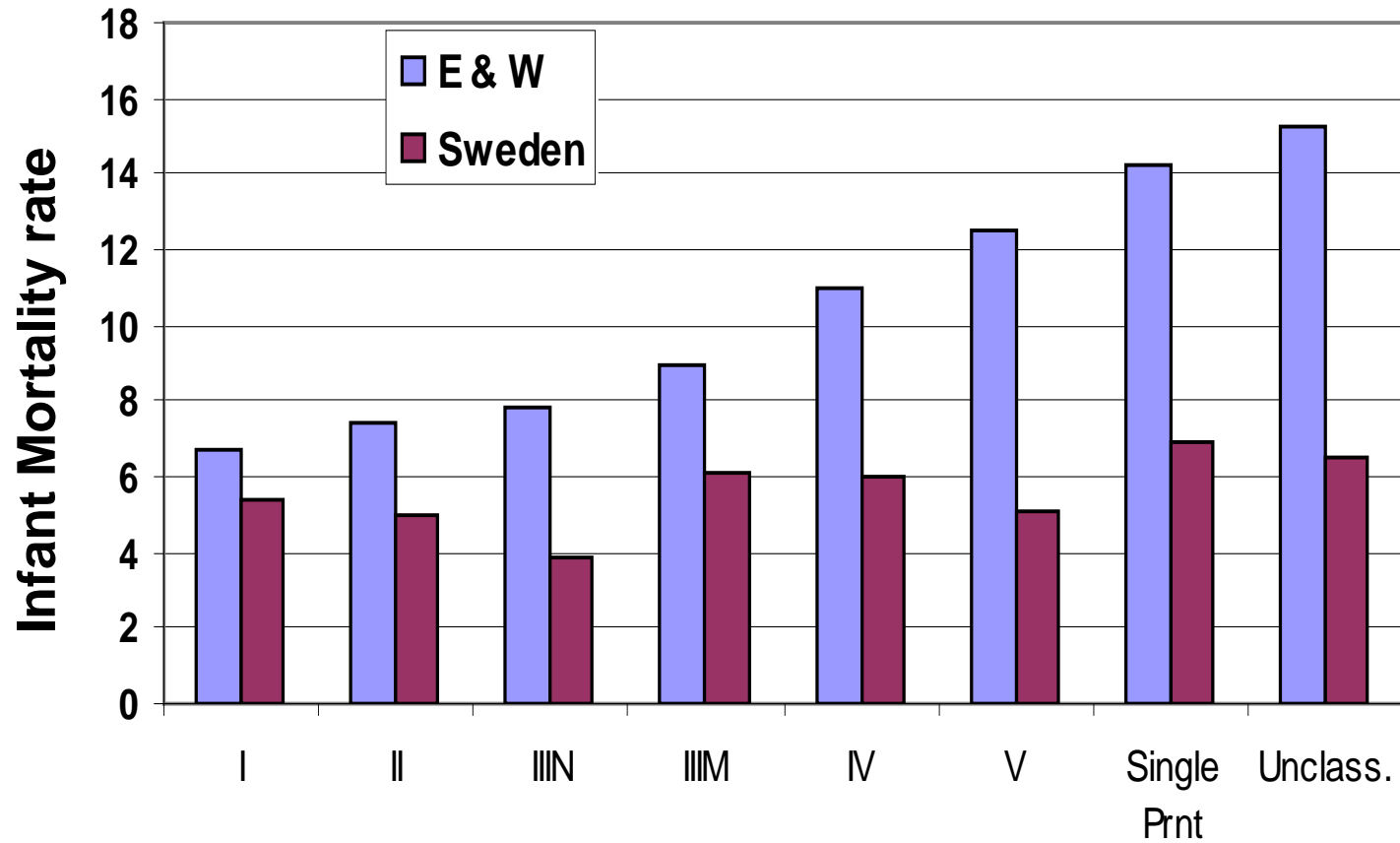


Intergenerational income mobility data from: Blanden J. (2009) Centre for Economic Performance, LSE. Paper No' CEEDP0111.

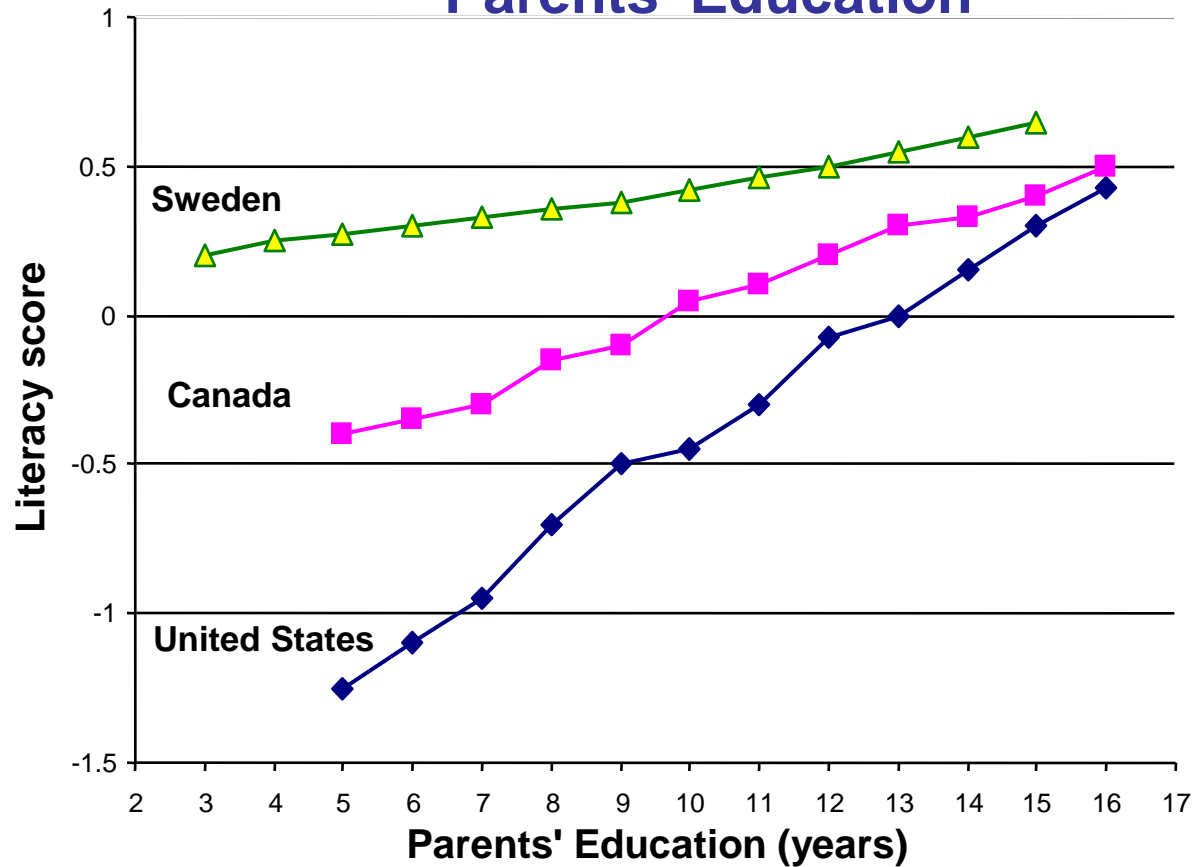
Almost everyone benefits from greater equality.

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



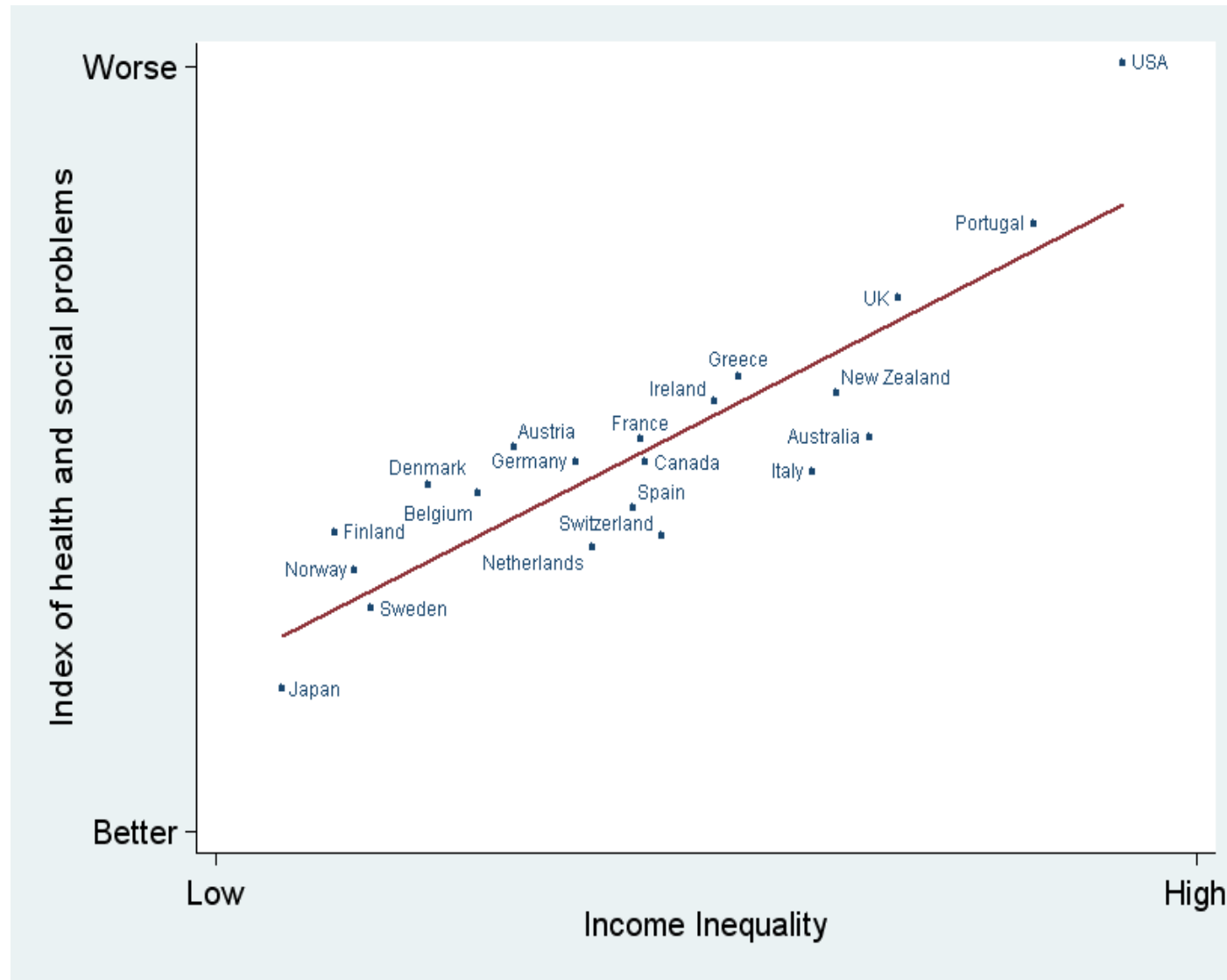
Literacy Scores of 16-25 year olds by Parents' Education



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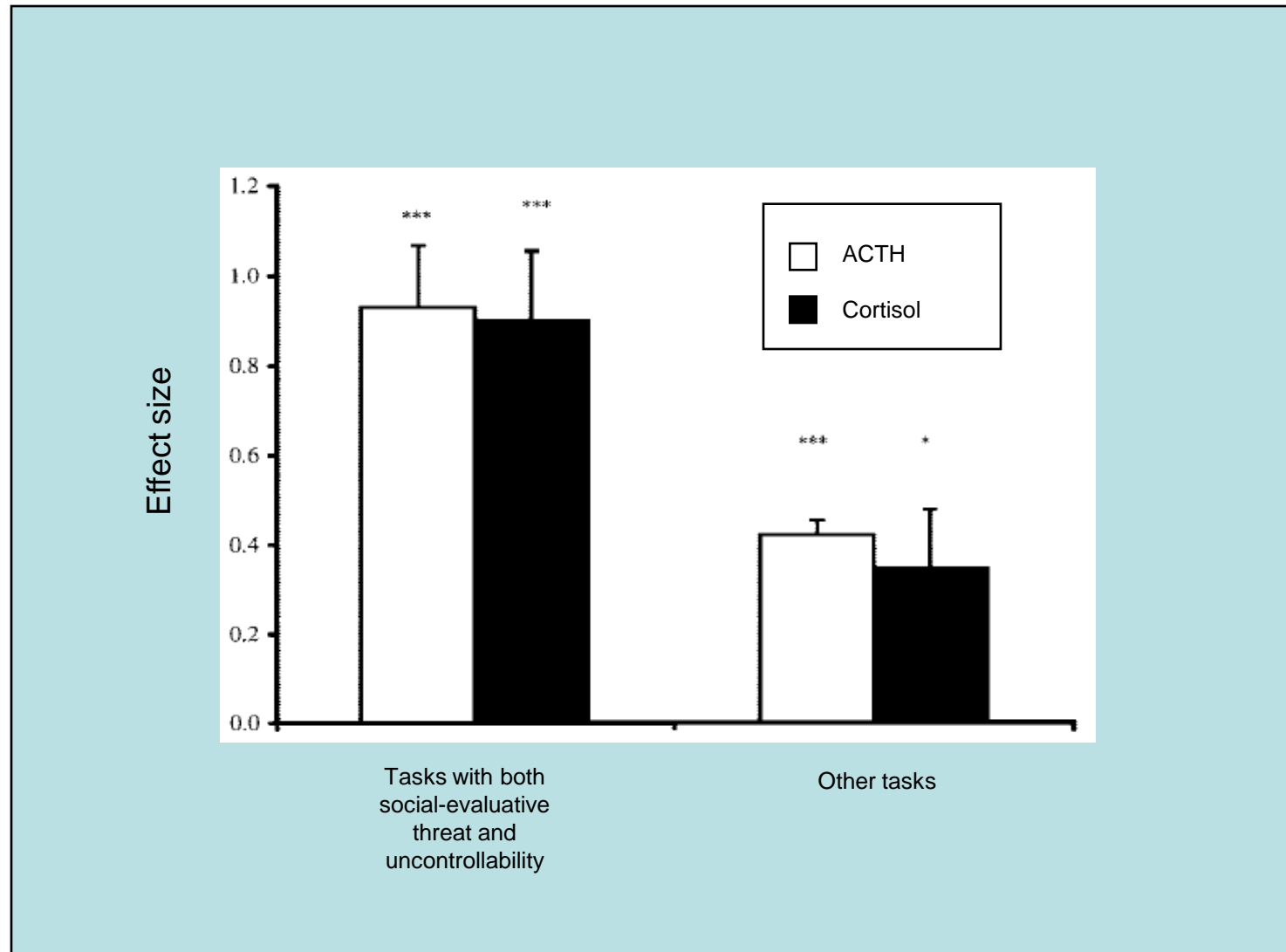


Why are we so sensitive to inequality?

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?



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

(G .P. Putnam 1996)

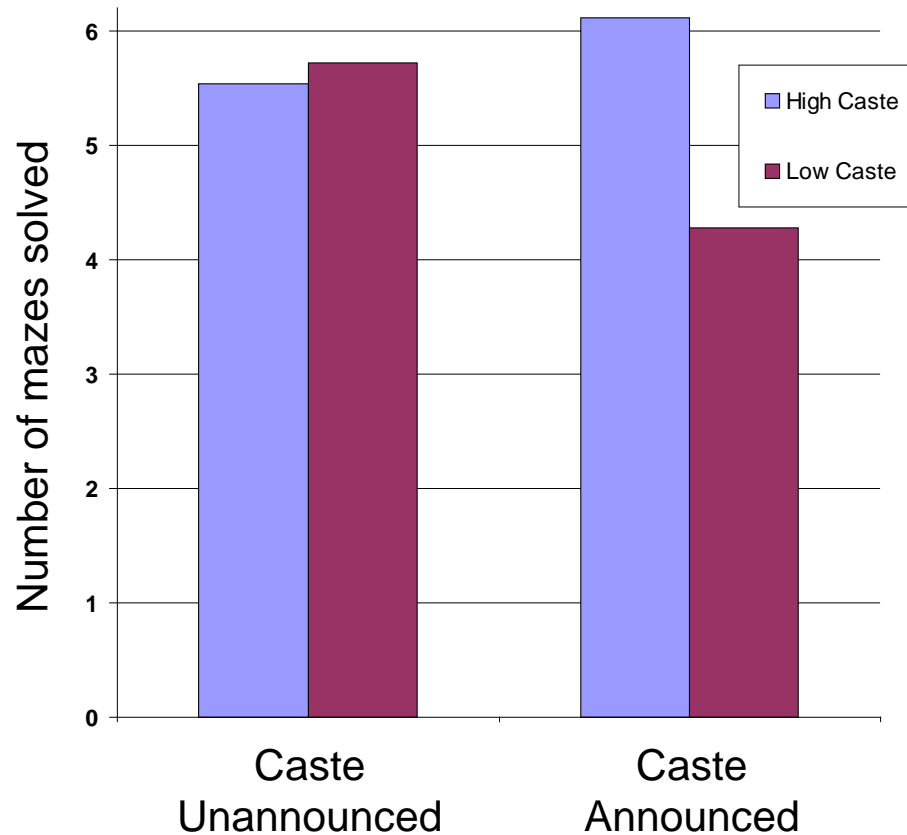
" ...the prison inmates I work with have told me repeatedly, when I asked them why they had assaulted someone, that it was because 'he disrespected me', or 'he disrespected my visit' (meaning 'visitor'). The word 'disrespect' is central in the vocabulary, moral value system, and psychodynamics of these 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:-

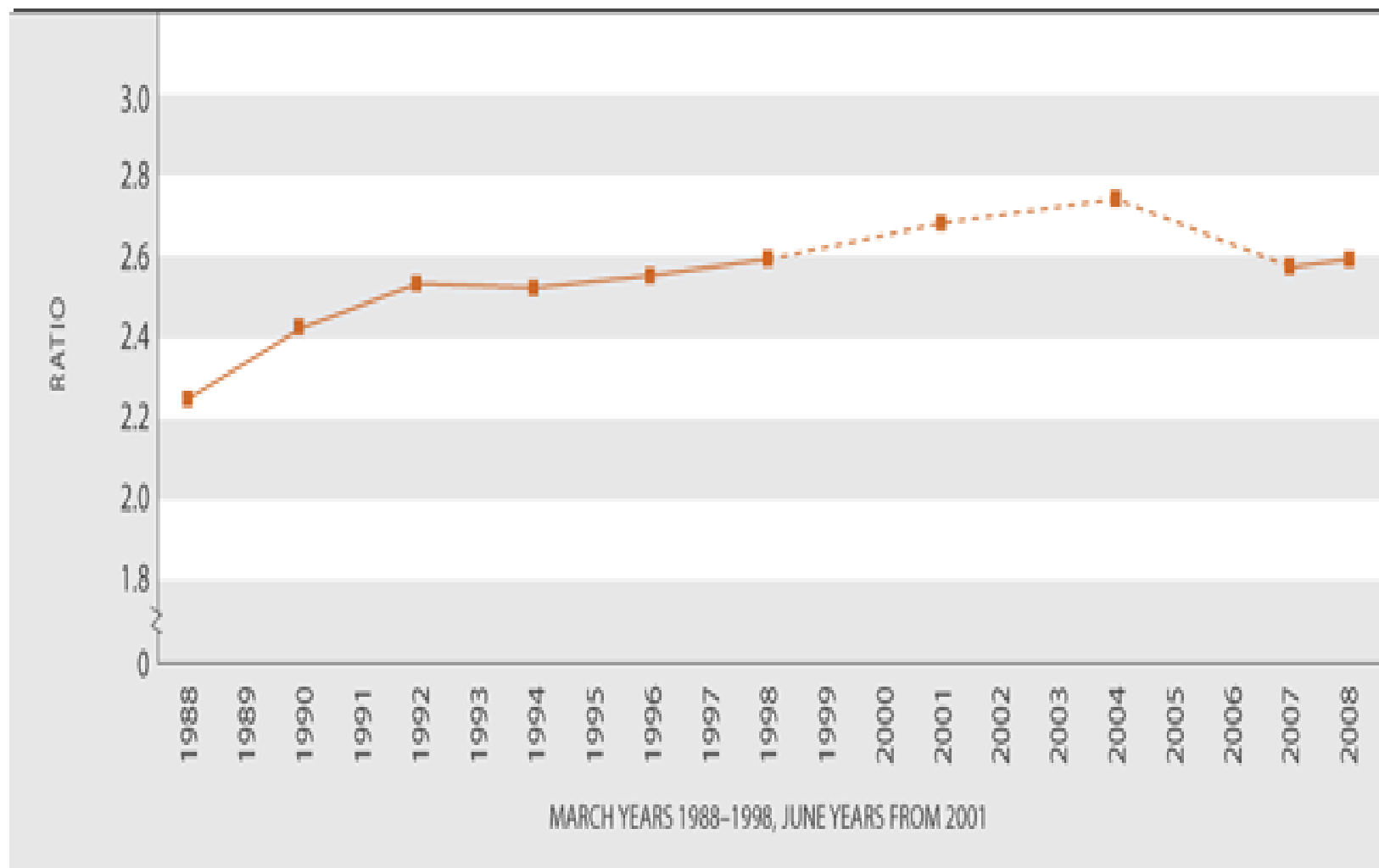
"I have yet to see a serious act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed, and that did not represent the attempt to prevent or undo this "loss of face " - no matter how severe the punishment, even if it includes death." p.110

Stereotype Threat

The effect of caste identity on children's performance



Ratio of 80th to 20th percentile of equivalised disposable household income New Zealand, 1988–2008





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For more information:

... a book

and a website...

The **Equality Trust**

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

Single parents and child wellbeing

