

Inequality and child wellbeing
Richard Wilkinson

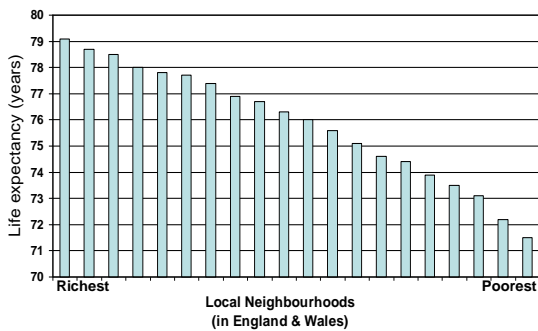
Emeritus Professor of Social Epidemiology



Photo by kind permission of Matt Stuart

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

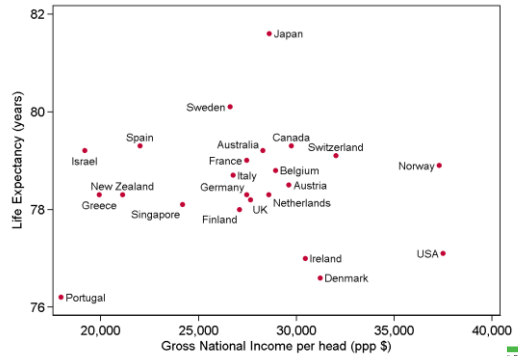
Life expectancy is strongly related to income within rich countries



Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level*

www.equalitytrust.org.uk

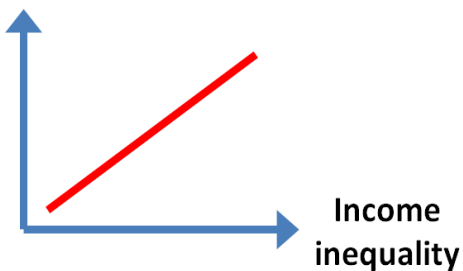
Life expectancy in rich countries is no longer related to National Income per head



Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level*

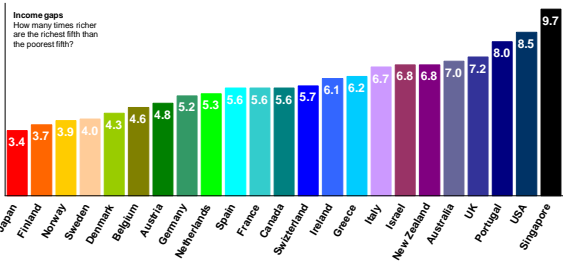
www.equalitytrust.org.uk

Problems



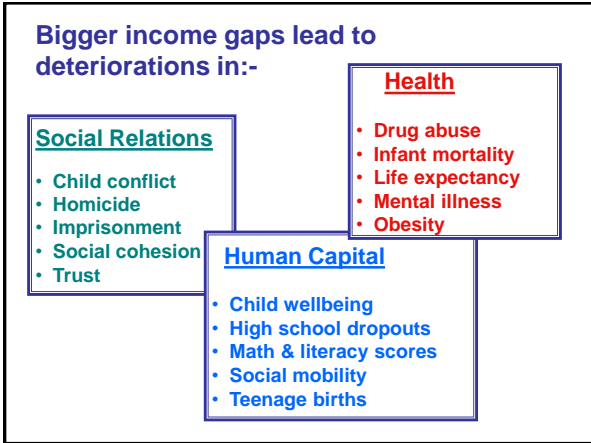
Inequality...

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

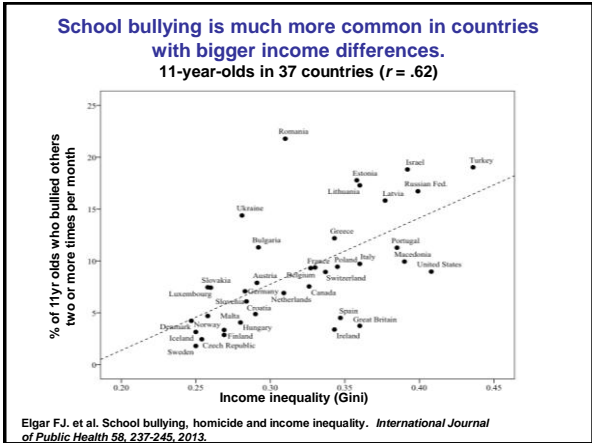
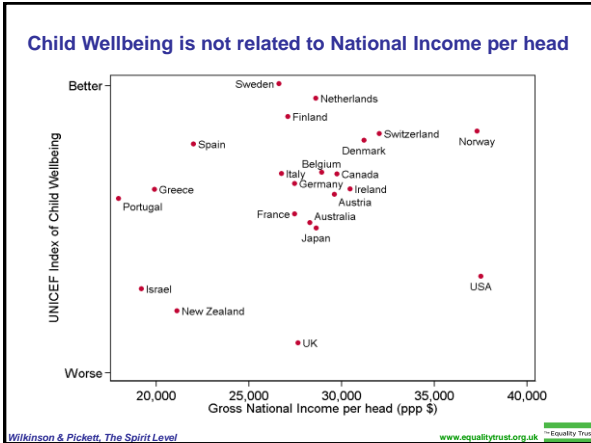
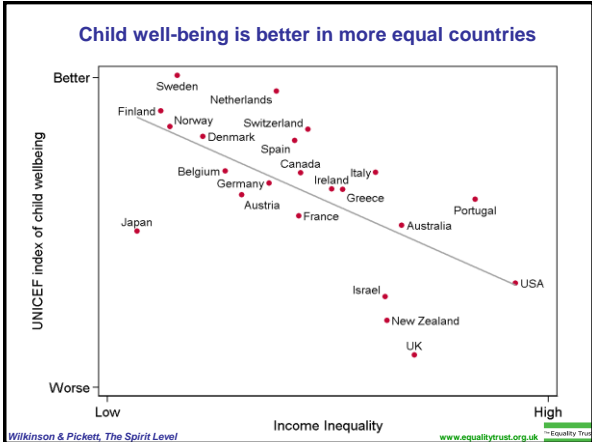


Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level*

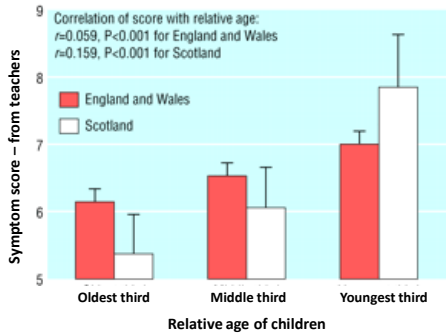
www.equalitytrust.org.uk



- Child outcomes found to be worse in more unequal societies**
- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In rich countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infant mortality - Low birth weight - Overweight - Maths & literacy scores - Teenage births - Child Conflict & Bullying - Social mobility - UNICEF Index of Child Wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In US states <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infant mortality - Low birth weight - Overweight - Maths & literacy scores - Teenage pregnancy - Mental health problems - Juvenile homicides - High School drop outs |
|--|--|



Children born later in the school year have more psychiatric disorders



Goodman R, Gledhill J, Ford T. Child psychiatric disorder and relative age within school year. *Bmj*. 2003 Aug 28;327(7413):472.

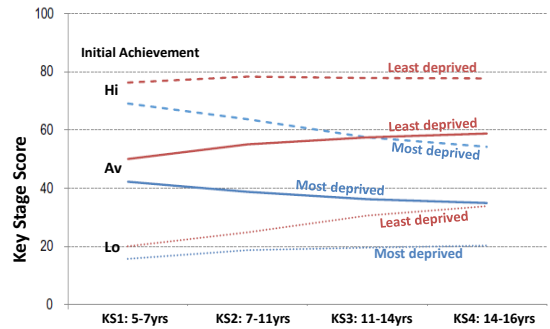
The age of criminal responsibility is lower in more unequal societies



Average maths and reading scores are lower in more unequal countries



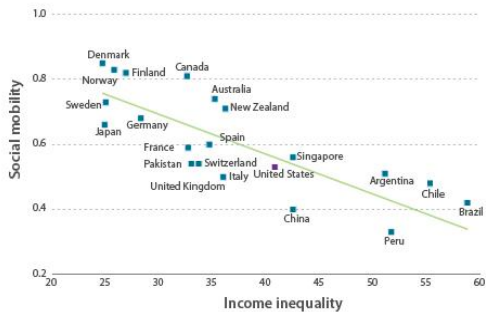
Even initially high achieving poor children fall behind



Crawford C, Macmillan L, Vignoles A. When and why do initially high-achieving poor children fall behind?. *Oxford Review of Education*. 2017 Jan 2;43(1):88-108

The Relationship between Income Inequality and Social Mobility

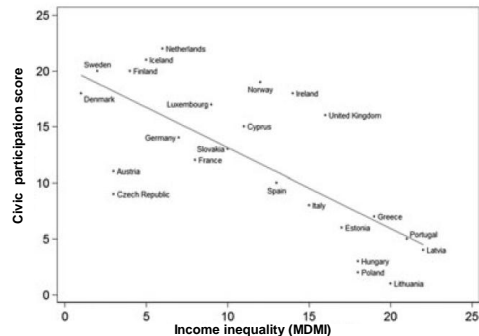
Around the world, high income inequality is associated with low social mobility.



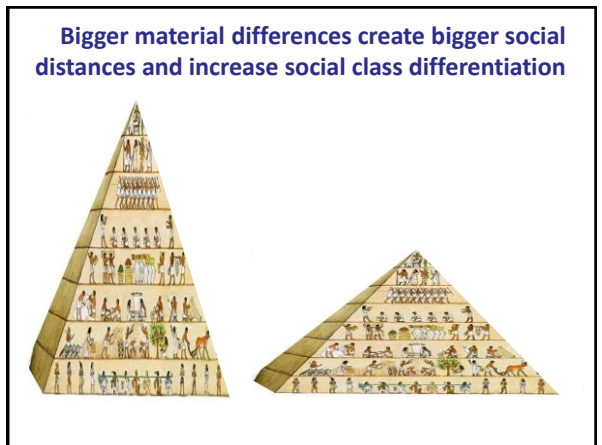
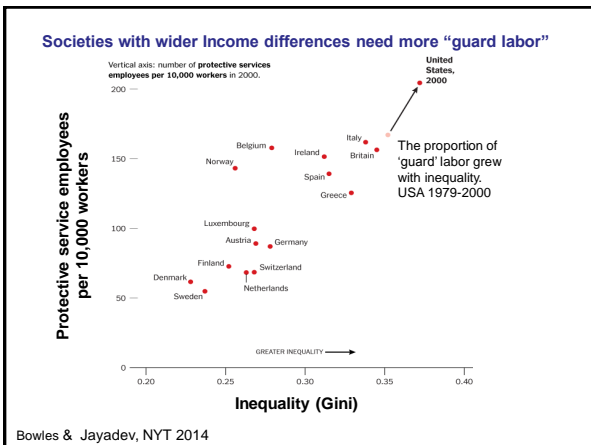
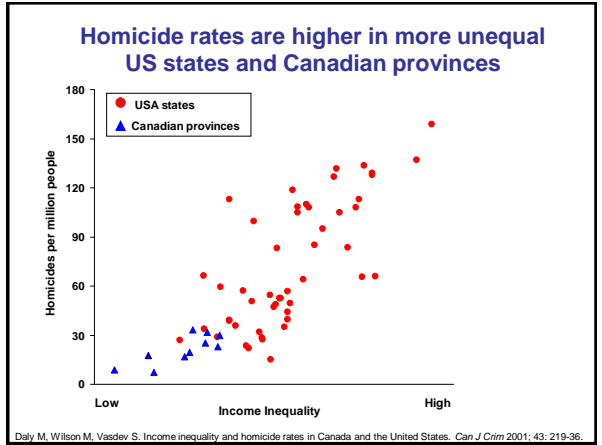
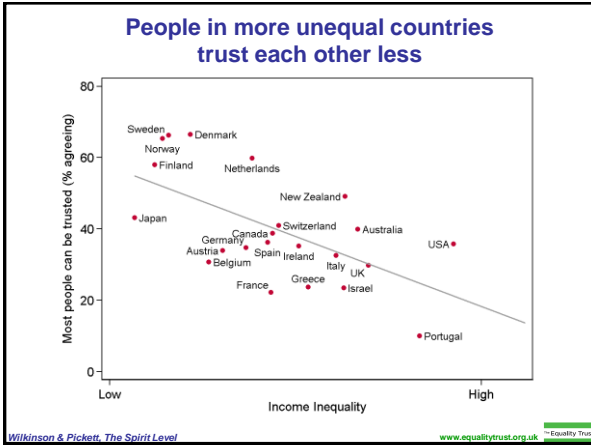
Data from Corak (2013), World Bank (2013)

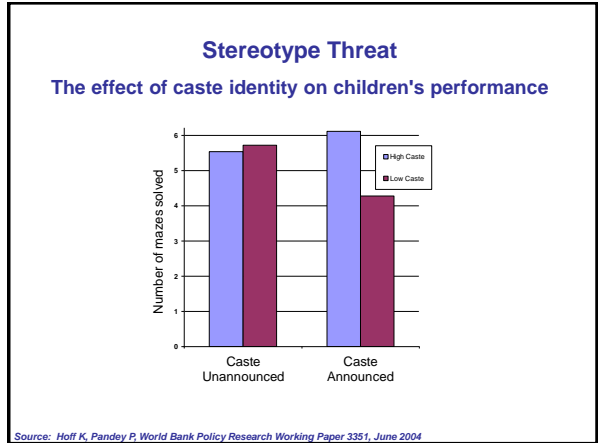
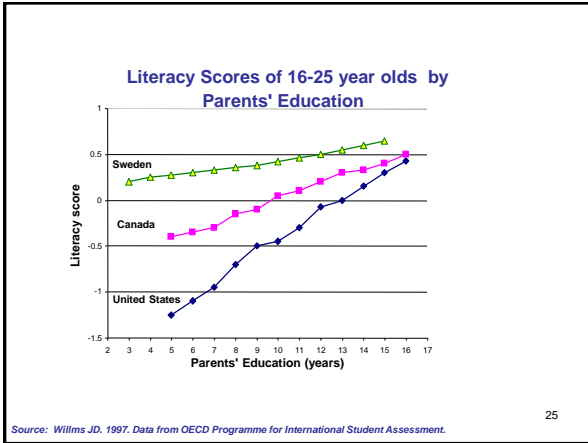


Participation in local groups and voluntary organisations is lower in more unequal societies.



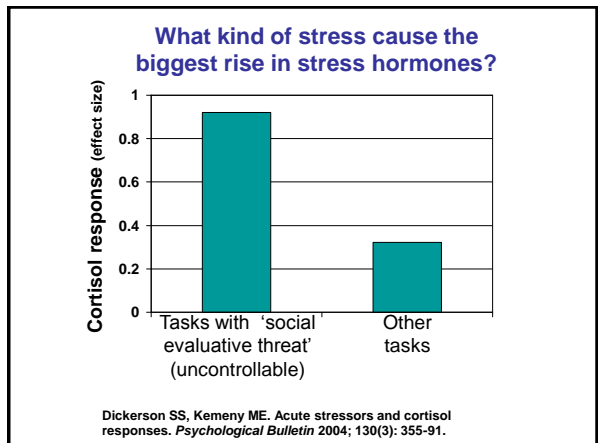
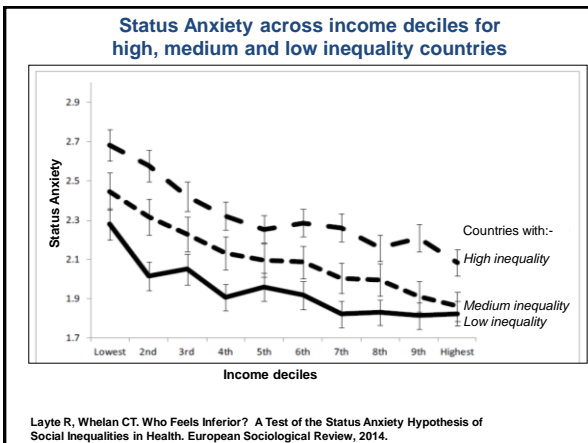
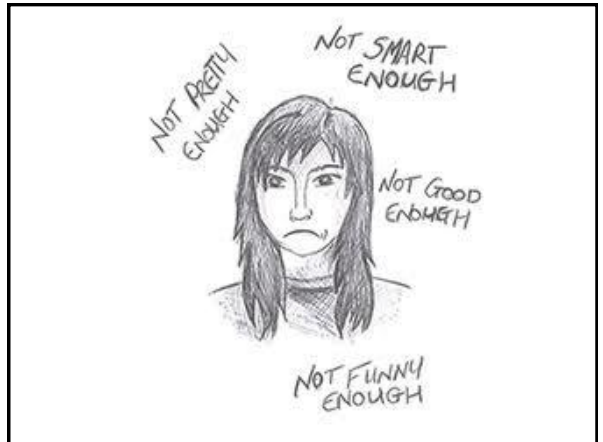
Lancee B, Van de Werfhorst HG. Income inequality and participation: A comparison of 24 European countries. *Social Science Research*. 2012; 41(5):1166-78.

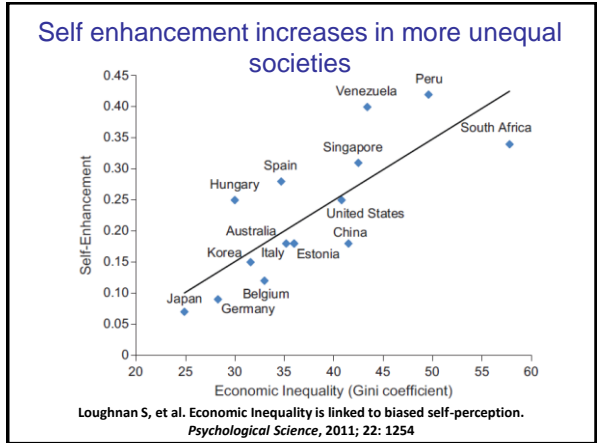
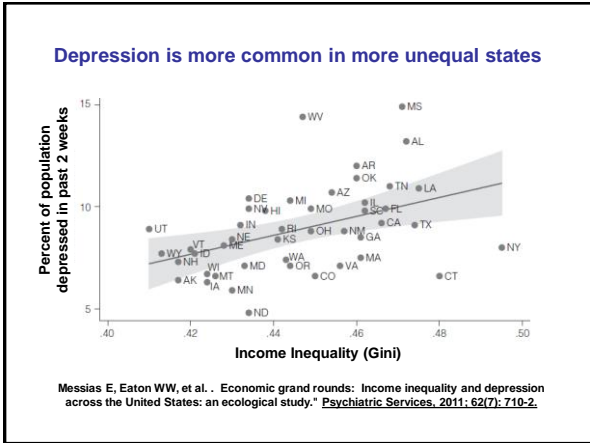




Alan Bennett, *Untold Stories*, Faber/Profile, 2005

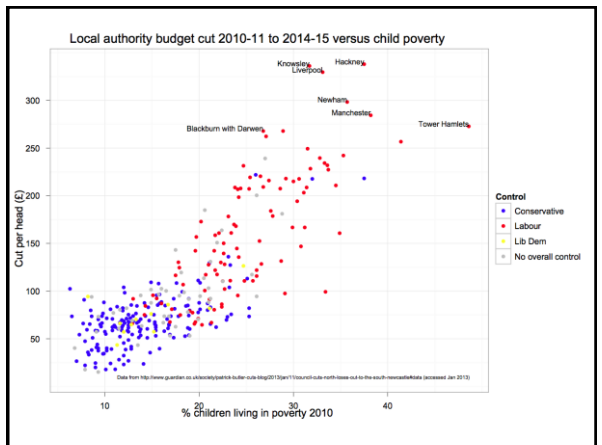
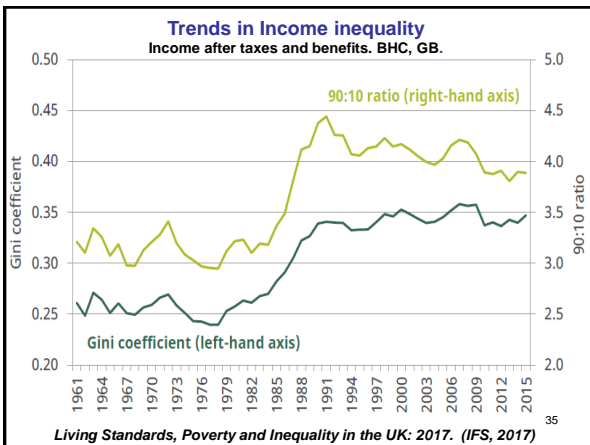
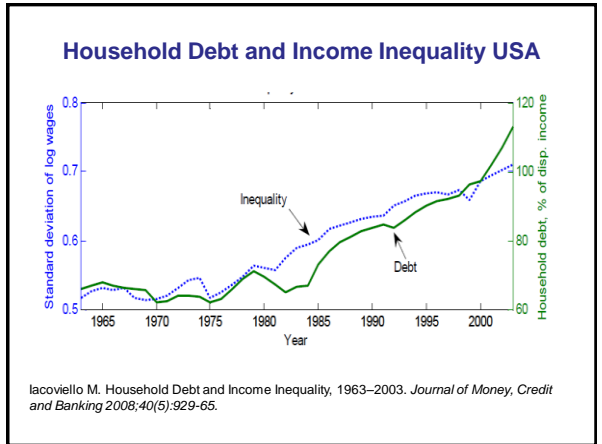
“(My parents) put...down...most of their imagined shortcomings to their not having been educated, education (was) to them a passport to everything they lacked: self-confidence, social ease and above all the ability to be like other people. Put simply and as they themselves would have put it, both my parents were shy, a shortcoming they thought of as an affliction while at the same time enshrining it as a virtue. I assured them, falsely, that everybody felt much as they did but that social ease was something that could and should be faked. ‘Well, you can do that,’ Dad would say, ‘you’ve been educated,’ adding how often he felt he had nothing to contribute. ‘I’m boring, I think. I can’t understand why anybody likes us. I wonder sometimes whether they do, really.’”





Inequality increases conspicuous consumption and consumerism

- People in more unequal areas of the USA are more likely to buy high status cars
- Data from Google searches shows that people in more unequal US states and more unequal countries are more likely to search for status goods



What can be done?

Income differences before tax

- Increase economic democracy - employee ownership etc
- Strengthen trade unions



Taxes & benefits

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

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



The Effects of Income inequality

EVIDENCE OF CAUSALITY

Pickett KE, Wilkinson RG. Income inequality and health: a causal review. *Social Science & Medicine* 2015;128: 316-26

THEORY & PSYCHOSOCIAL PROCESSES

Wilkinson RG, Pickett KE. The enemy between us: The psychological and social costs of inequality. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 2017; 47, 11-24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2275>

CREATING THE SOCIETY WE WANT

Wilkinson RG, Pickett KE. *A Convenient Truth: A Better Society for Us and the Planet*. Fabian Society, London 2014. <http://www.fabians.org.uk/publications/a-convenient-truth/>