



Poverty, Childhood Experiences & Well-being in BC

Kate Buium, Knowledge Broker, HELP
Dr. Martin Guhn, Professor & HELP Faculty
Adrienne Montani, Executive Director, First Call



HUMAN
EARLY LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP



Our work takes place on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) people

HUMAN
EARLY LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP



Outline

Welcome & Introduction



Dr. Martin Guhn, Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP, UBC)

- Social gradient
- BC Child Development Monitoring System data over 20 years

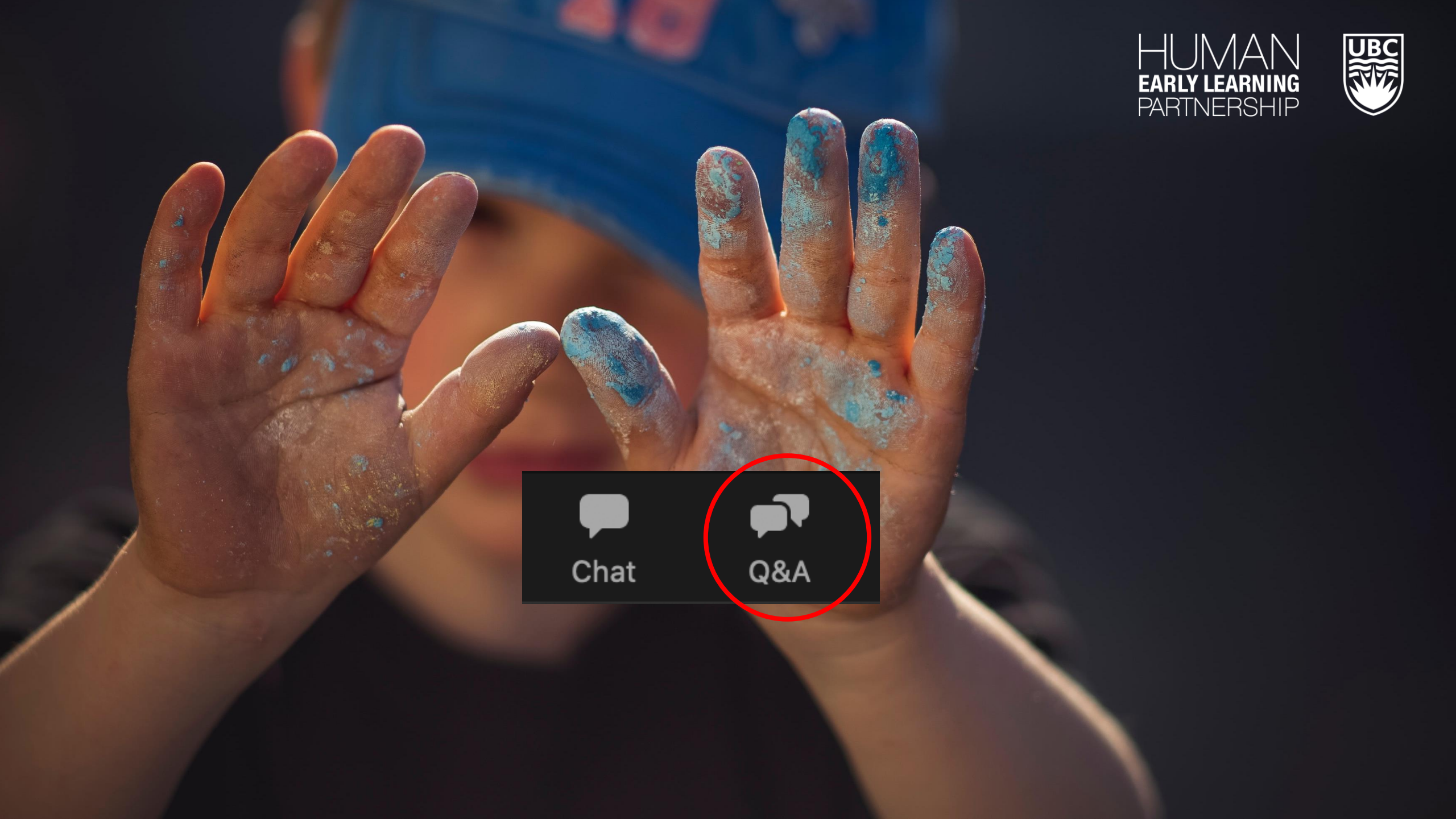


Adrienne Montani, Executive Director First Call

- Key highlights from BC Poverty Report Card 2023
- Successes
- Recommendations

Q&A Discussion






Chat



Q&A



HELP was founded as a research centre dedicated to exploring “**the differences that make a difference**” in children’s early development.



HUMAN
EARLY LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP



Contexts Influencing Child Development

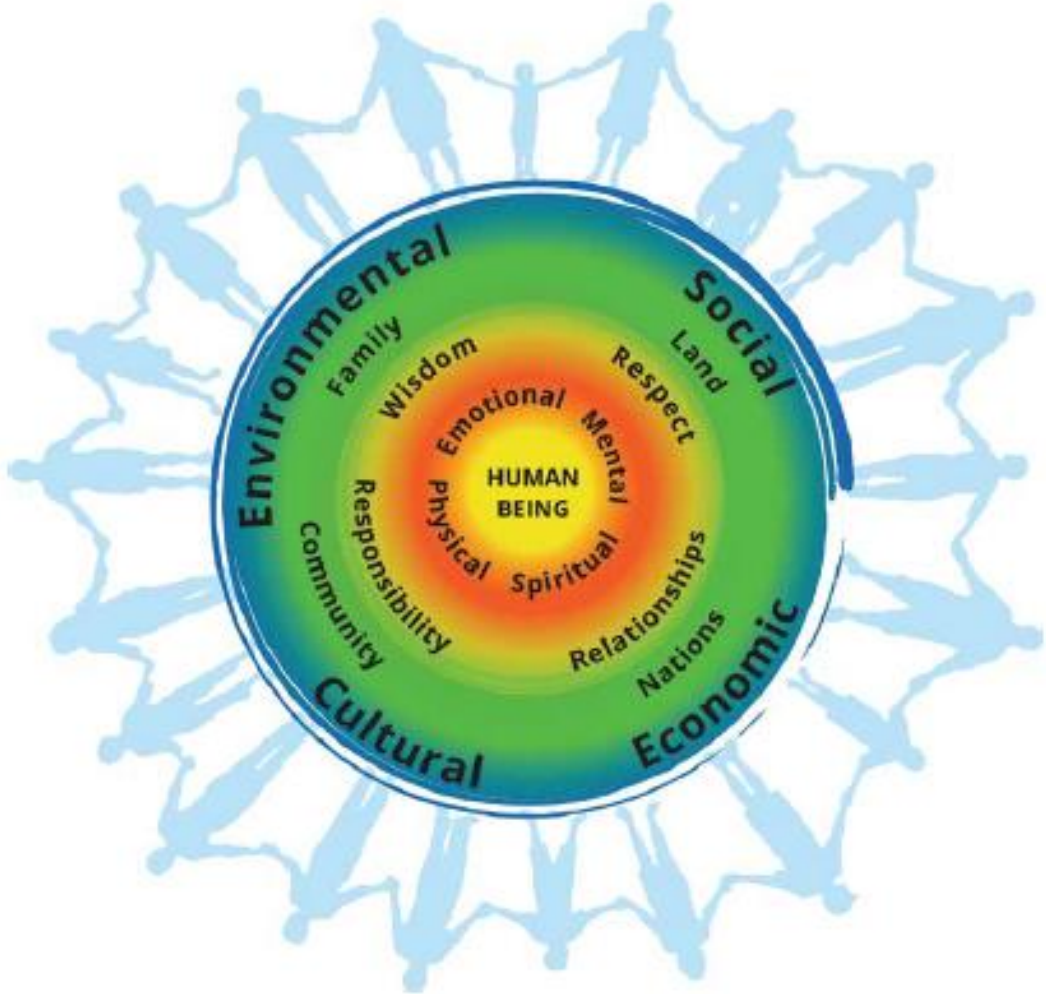
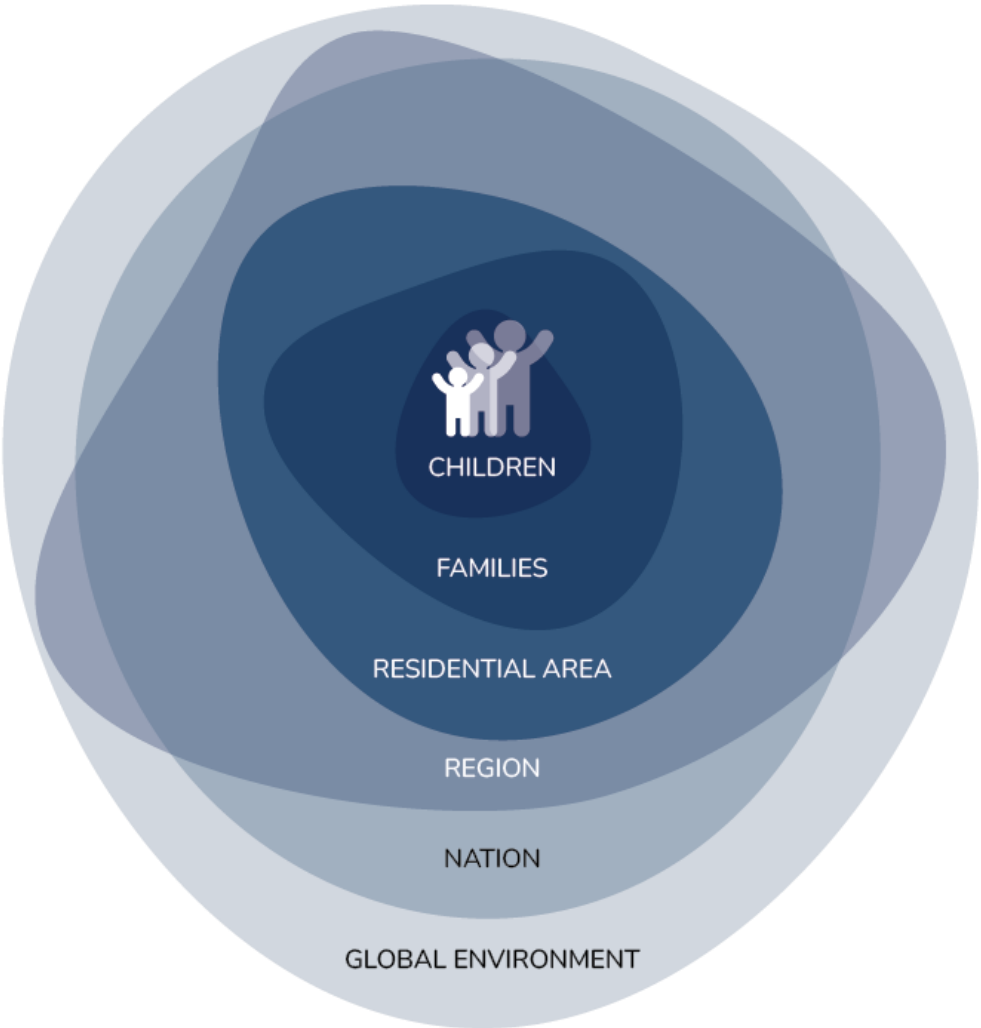
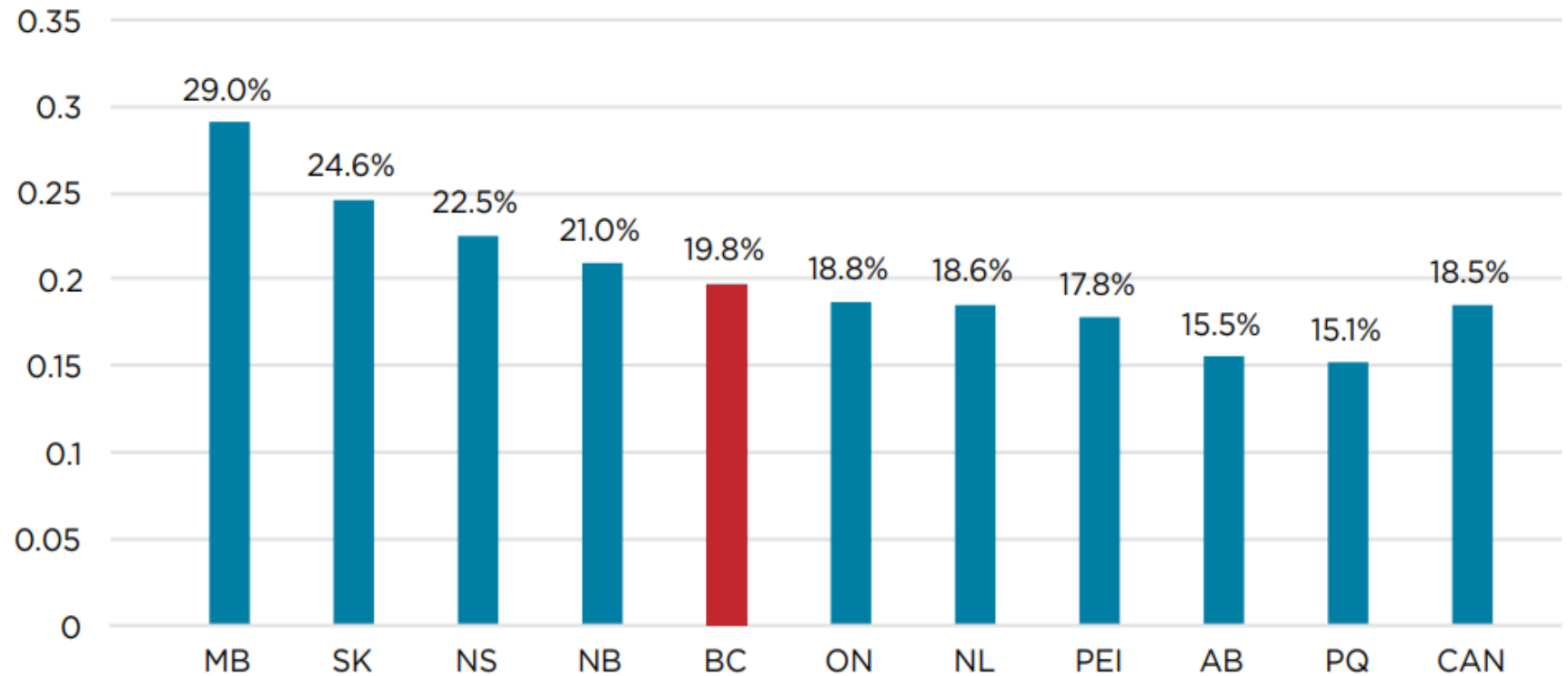


FIGURE 1. "THE FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVE ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS" AS DEVELOPED BY THE BRITISH COLUMBIA FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY.⁷

For two decades, BC's child poverty rate hovered around **20-25% (1 in every 4 or 5 children)** and was higher than the Canadian rate.

Child Poverty Rates by Province, LIM After Tax, 2014



Source: Statistics Canada. Table F-18. Family Data. CANSIM Table 111-0015.

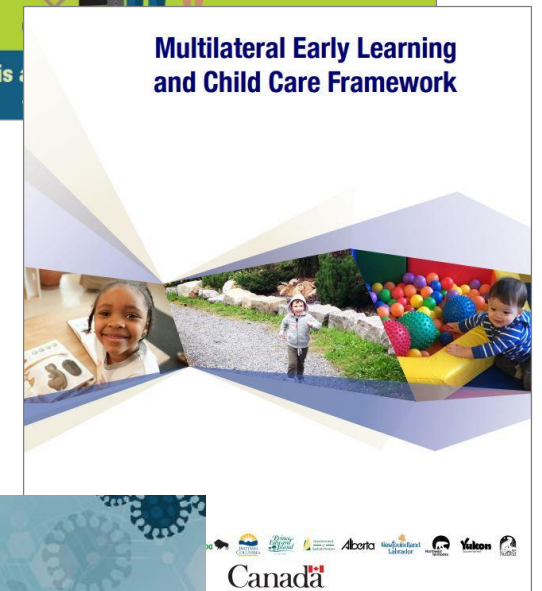
Recent Government Policy & Investment in Support of Children & Families

Federal

- Increases to *Canada Child Benefit* (2019, 2021)
- Extension of *parental leave* to 18 months (2019)
- *Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan* (2021); Bill-35
An Act Respecting Early Learning and Child Care in Canada (2024)

2020-2022:

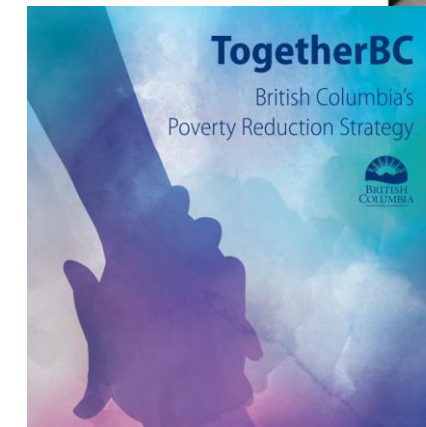
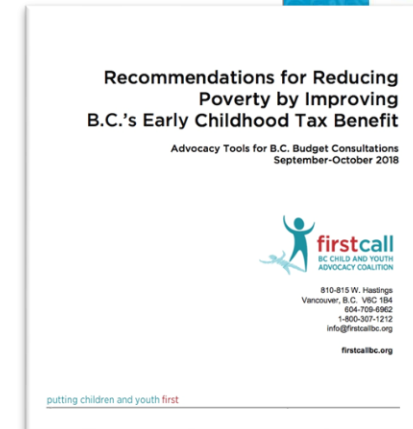
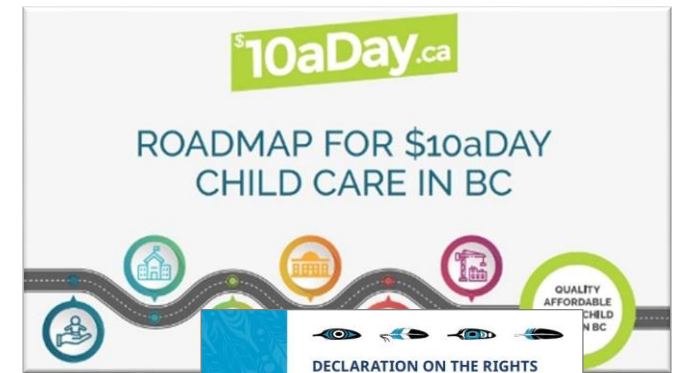
Federal & Provincial Pandemic Relief Programs



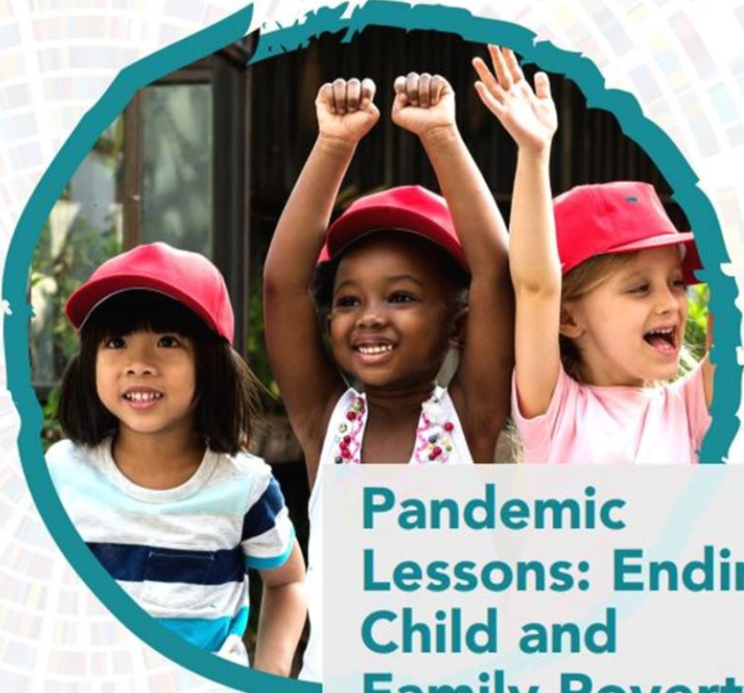
Recent Government Policy & Investment in Support of Children & Families

Provincial

- *Child Care B.C. Caring for Kids, Lifting Up Families* (2018)
- *BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2019)
- *BC Child Opportunity Benefit* (2019) (renamed *Family Benefit*)
- *TogetherBC Poverty Reduction Strategy* (2019)
- *BC Early Learning Framework* (2019)
- Ministry of Education and Child Care



2022 | Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada




Pandemic Lessons: Ending Child and Family Poverty is Possible

CAMPAIGN 2000 END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY | vivicresearch | United Way Greater Toronto | FAMILY SERVICE TORONTO For People. For Change.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, **Canada's** child poverty rate dropped by 40%. This progress was largely due to temporary pandemic benefits.

BRITISH COLUMBIA



2022 BC CHILD POVERTY REPORT CARD

firstcall CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCACY SOCIETY

BC's child poverty rate dropped from 1 in 5 to 1 in 8.

It seemed that things were headed in the right direction ...

“My son’s asthma medication is not covered, and my disability cheques aren’t enough to make ends meet. I skip meals or have a slice of toast so that I can have money for my son’s needs.”

“My family takes transit. By the time I take my children to school and daycare in different locations, and then bus to work, it takes me about two hours. I’m spending four hours a day commuting on transit because there are no daycare spots available close to home or work.”

“The heat wasn’t working and overnight temperatures were near zero. My children had to sleep in my bed. It took two weeks for the landlord to replace the furnace. When your rent is below market value, you keep quiet and make yourself agreeable.”

“It is now impossible to buy all the provisions we need, so we buy the cheapest food and eat the same meals over and over. This is demeaning and not good for children’s health. Fresh foods are extremely expensive.”




Among the social determinants of health, **socioeconomic status is a fundamental determinant** that is intricately intertwined with other factors.

The life-long stepwise association between income and a range of children's developmental health outcomes is so strong and consistent that it has been termed a "**gradient effect**" and serves as a powerful illustration of inequalities in children's health and well-being within and between societies (Enns, Brownell, Janus, & Guhn, 2019).




Early Years Matter

Early Child Development:
A Powerful Equalizer
Final Report



Prepared by
Dr. Lori G. Irwin
Dr. Arjumand Siddiqi
Dr. Clyde Hertzman



The socioeconomic gradient in health

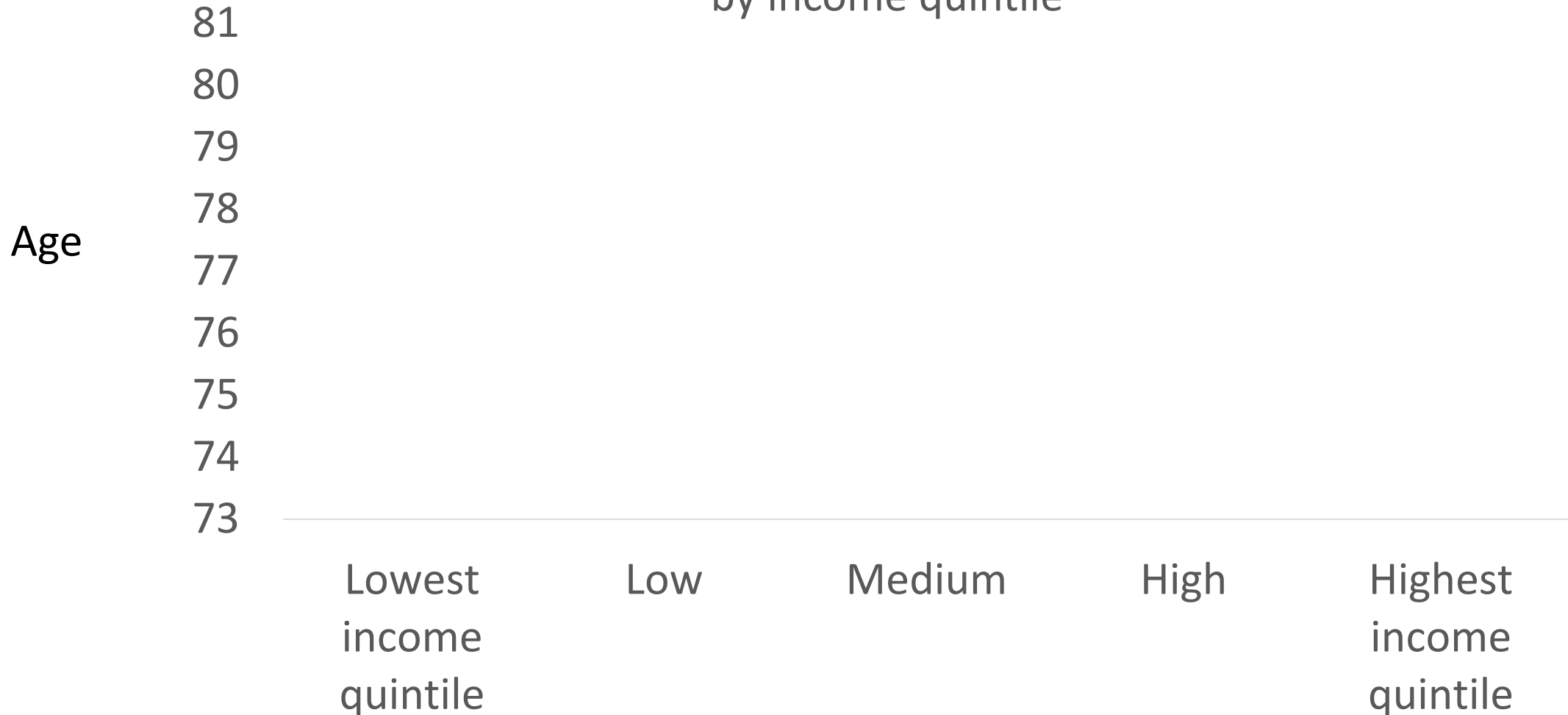
Inequalities in socioeconomic status

are related to

inequalities in population health.

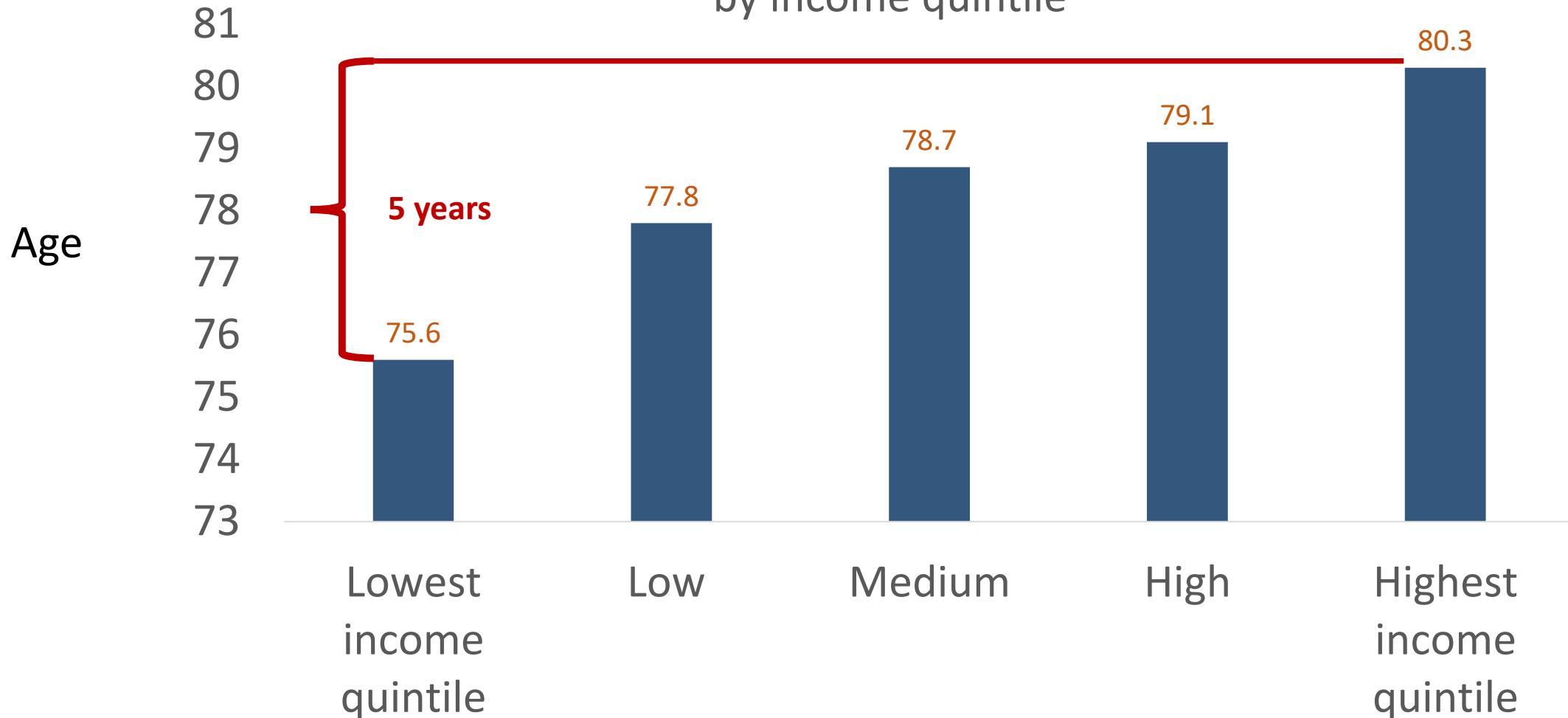
The socioeconomic gradient in health

Life expectancy (years) for Canadian men, 2005,
by income quintile



The socioeconomic gradient in health

Life expectancy (years) for Canadian men, 2005,
by income quintile



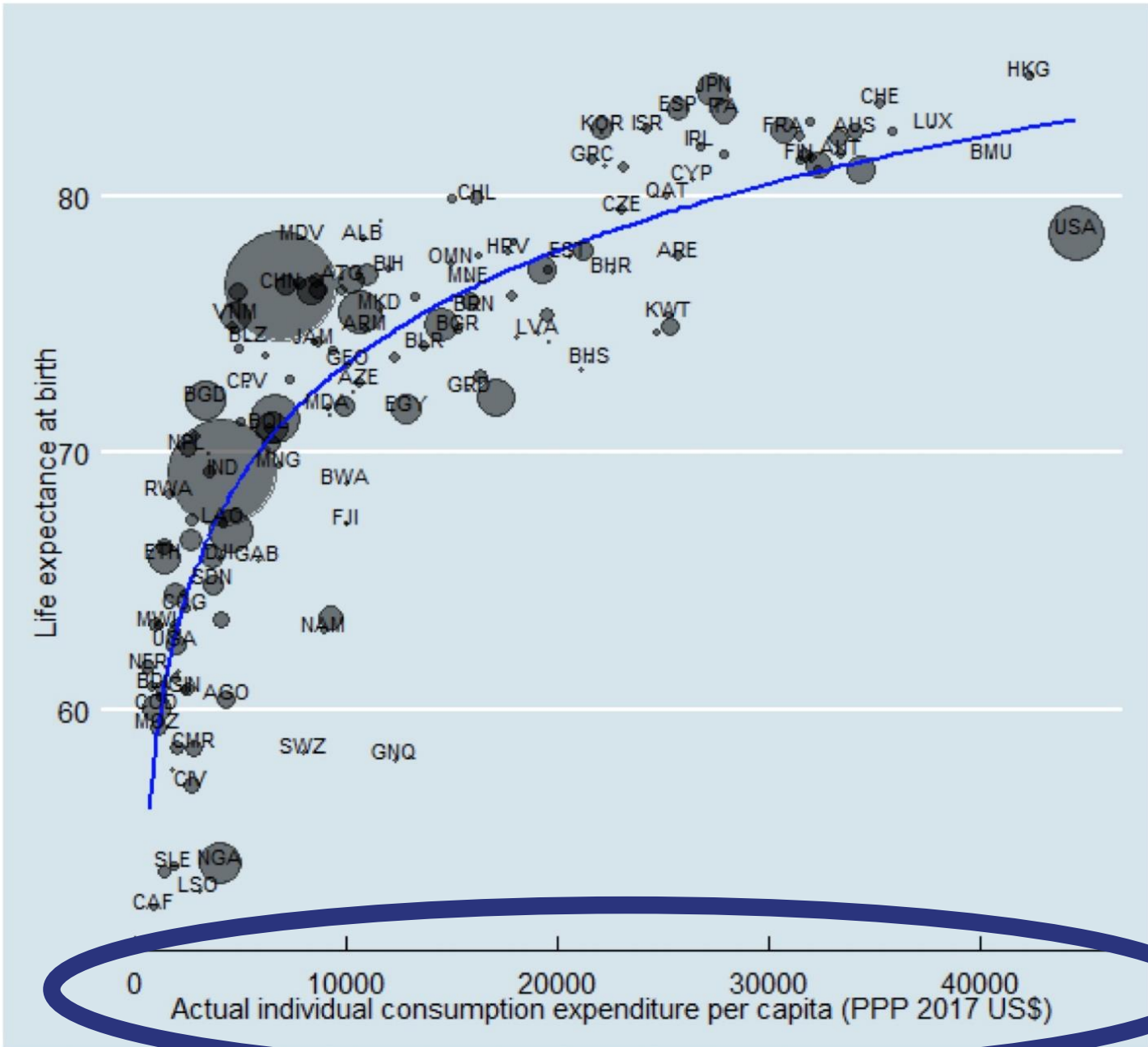


Figure 2. Life Expectancy at Birth and Actual Individual Consumption per Capita, 2017

Source: International Comparison Program (2020), World Development Indicators (2020): the areas of the circles are proportional to population of each country

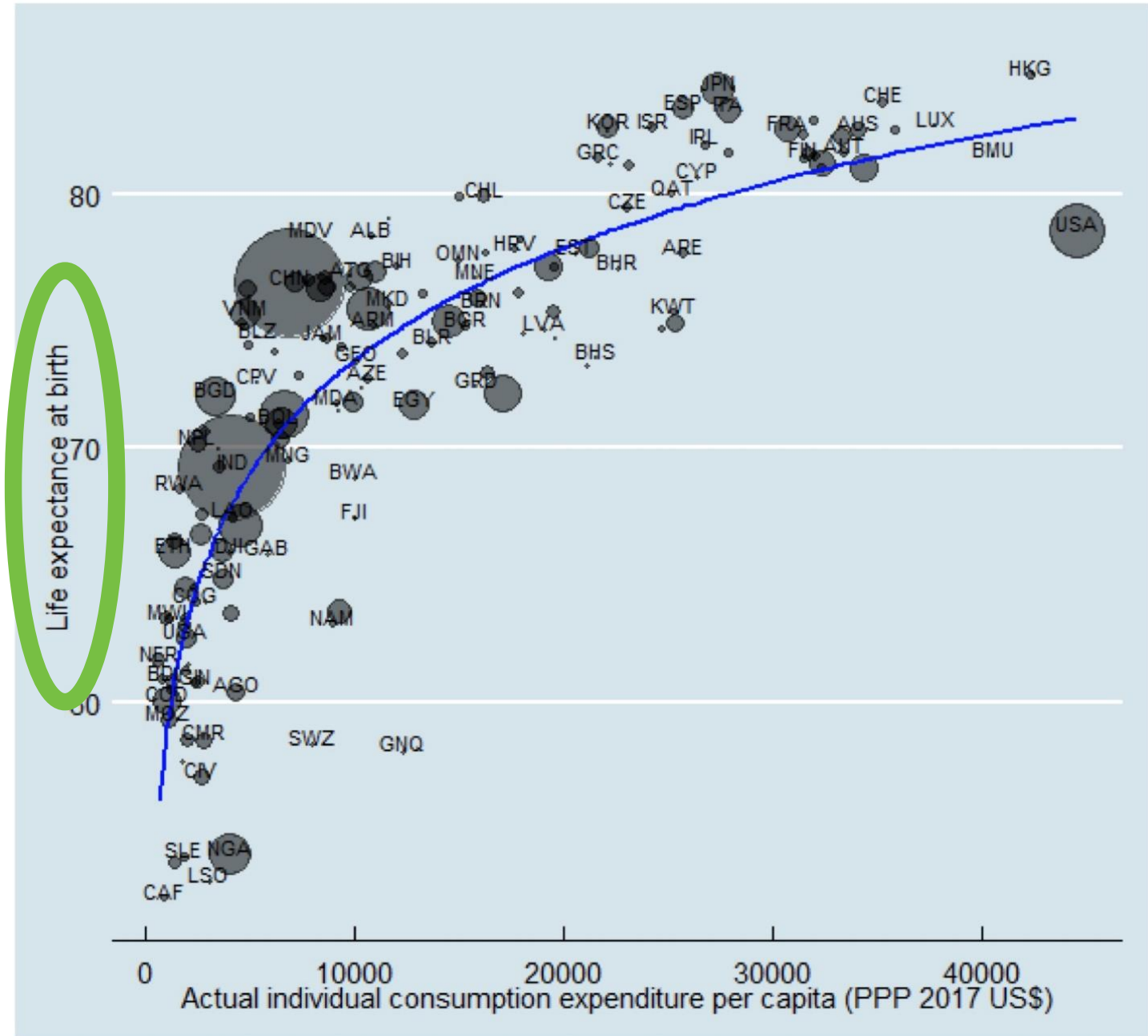


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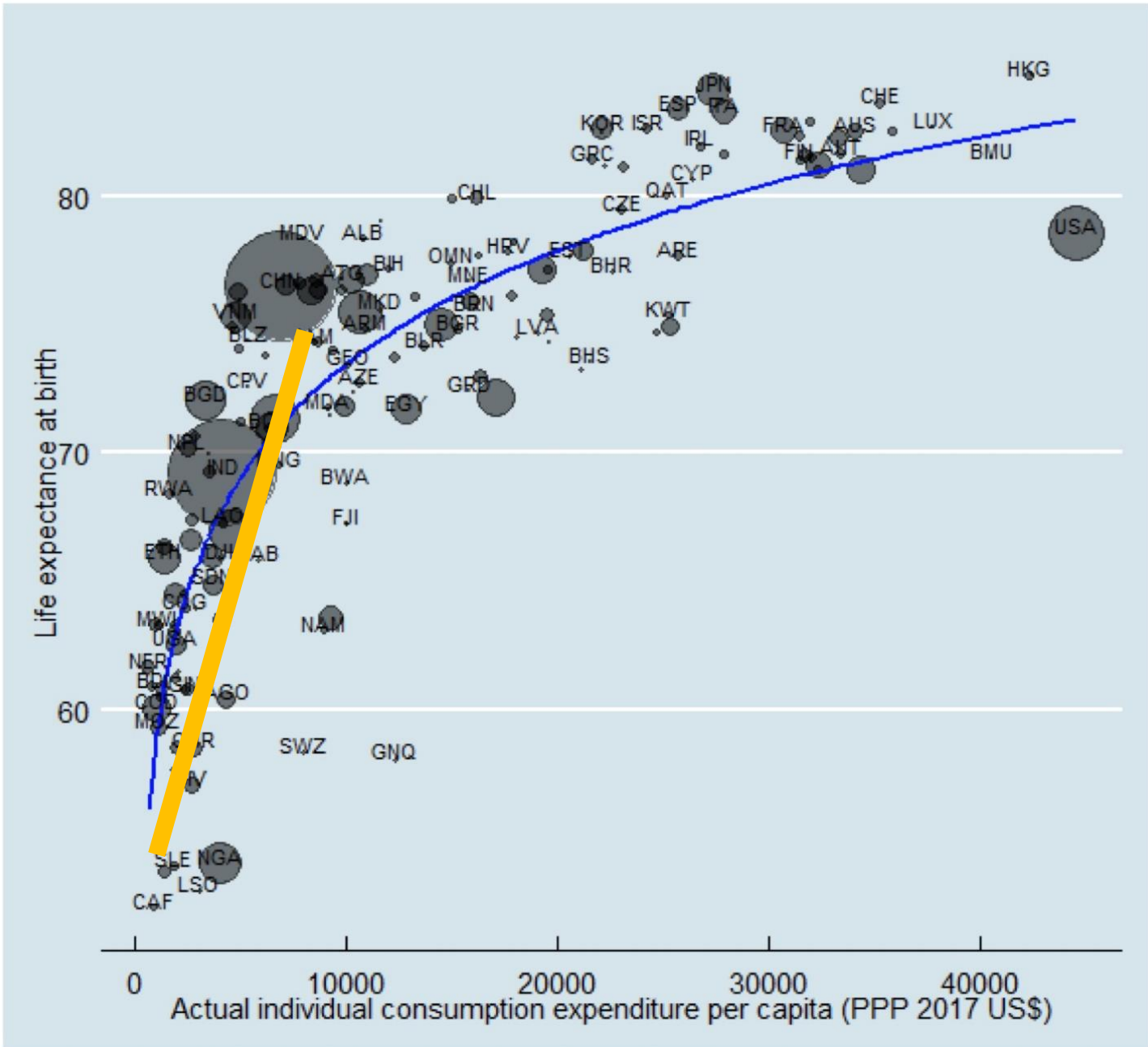


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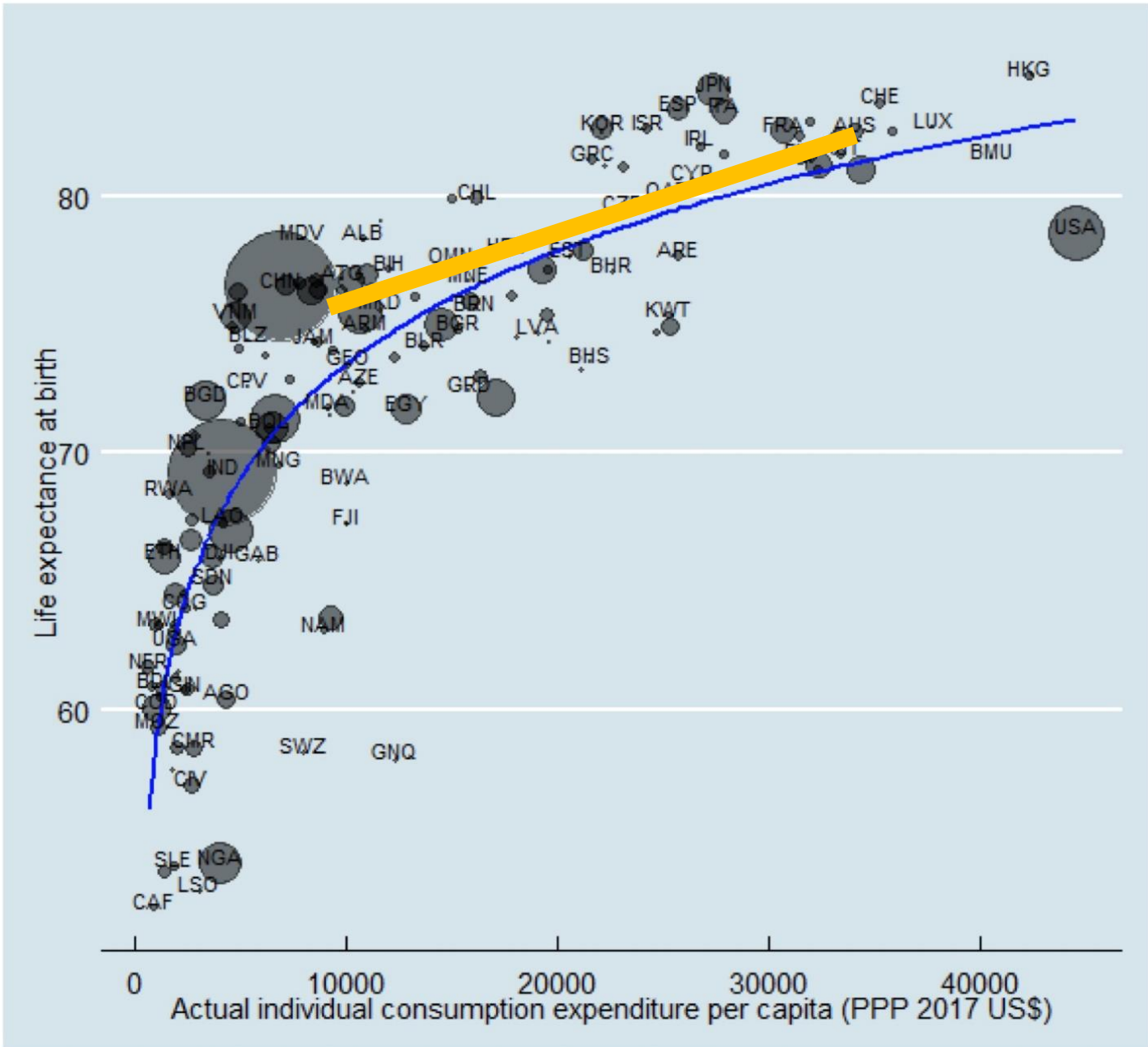


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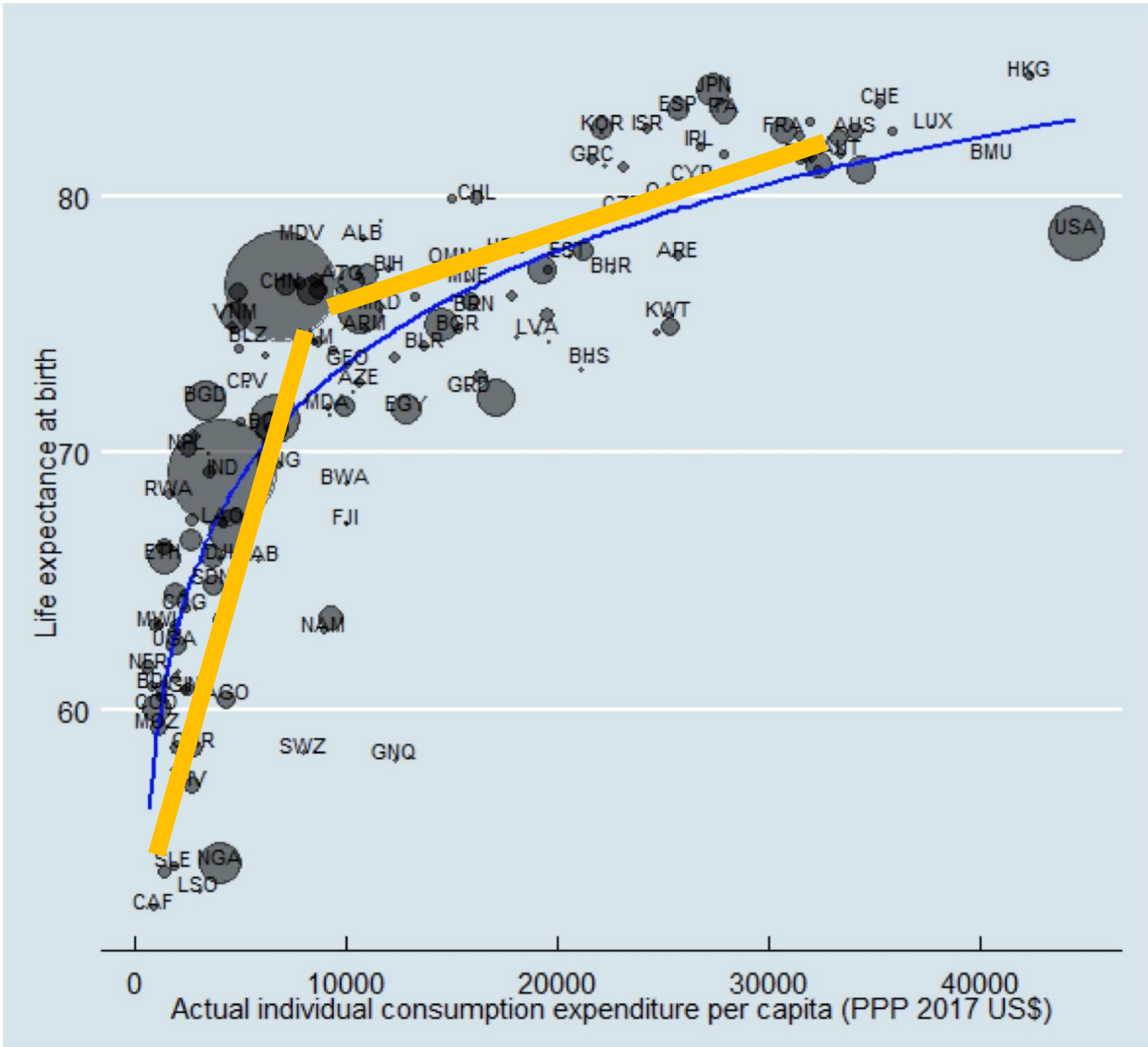


Figure 2. Life Expectancy at Birth and Actual Individual Consumption per Capita, 2017

Diminishing return

The effect of going from ‘having almost nothing’ to ‘having a little’ is more pronounced than going from ‘having enough’ to ‘more than enough’.

Child Development Monitoring System



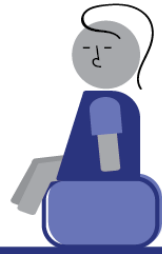
TDi

**Toddler
Development
Instrument**

1-2 Years

Parent & caregiver
questionnaire

**EARLY EXPERIENCES
& CONTEXTS**



CHEQ

**Childhood
Experiences
Questionnaire**

Start of kindergarten

Parent & caregiver
questionnaire

**EARLY EXPERIENCES
& CONTEXTS**



EDi

**Early
Development
Instrument**

Mid-kindergarten

Teacher
questionnaire

**SKILLS &
COMPETENCES**



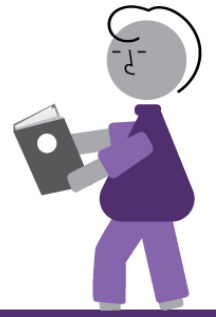
MDi

**Middle Years
Development
Instrument**

Grades 4 - 8

Student
questionnaire

**WELL-BEING
& ASSETS**



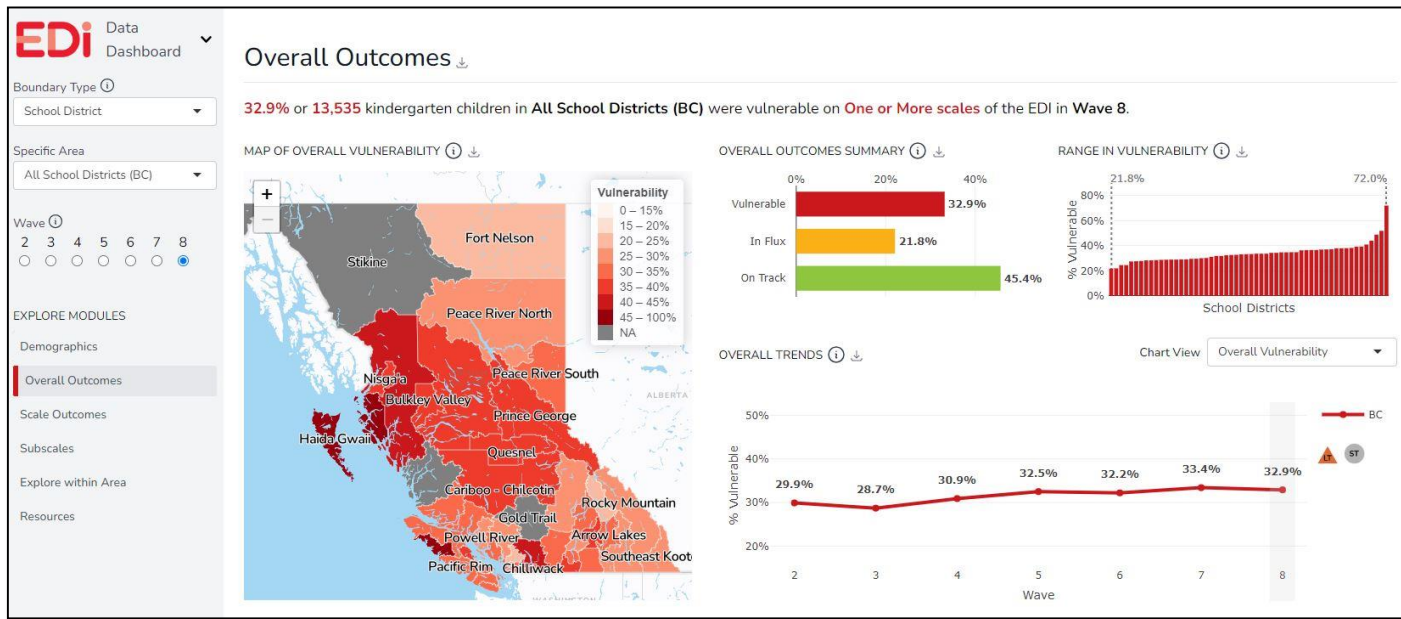
YDi

**Youth
Development
Instrument**

Grades 10-12

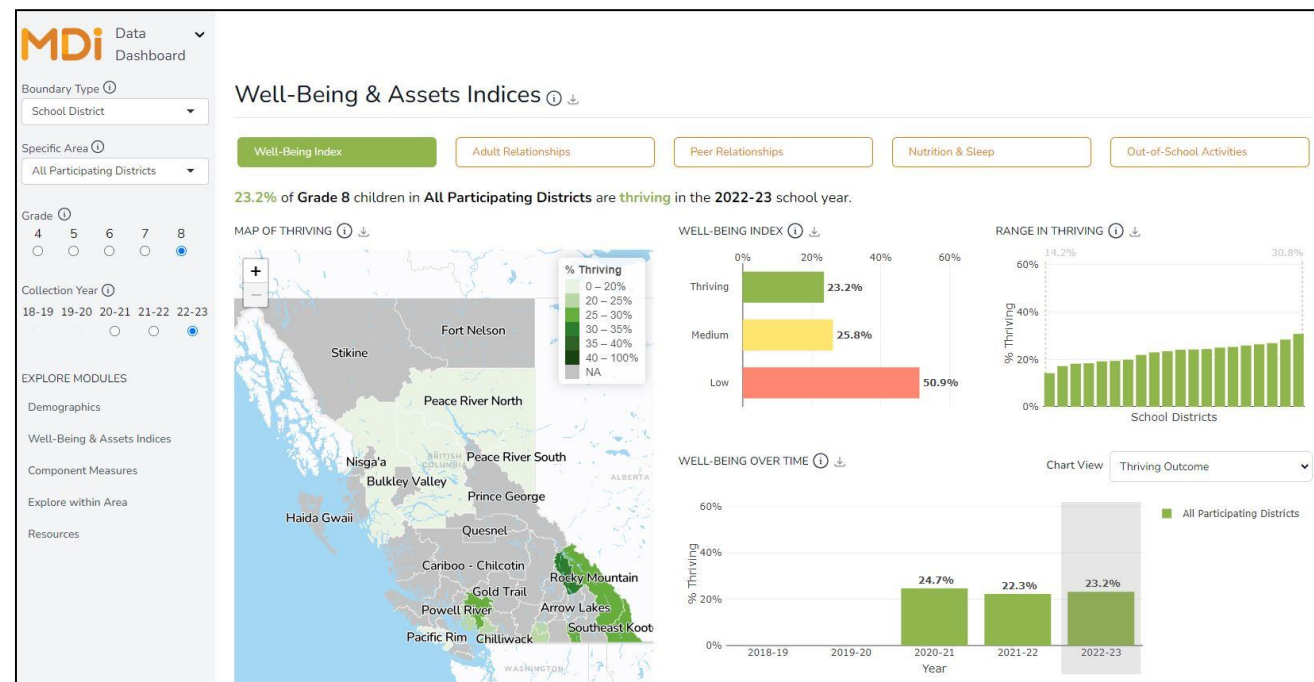
Student
questionnaire

**WELL-BEING
& ASSETS**



New Data Dashboards

earlylearning.ubc.ca/reports/#data-dashboards



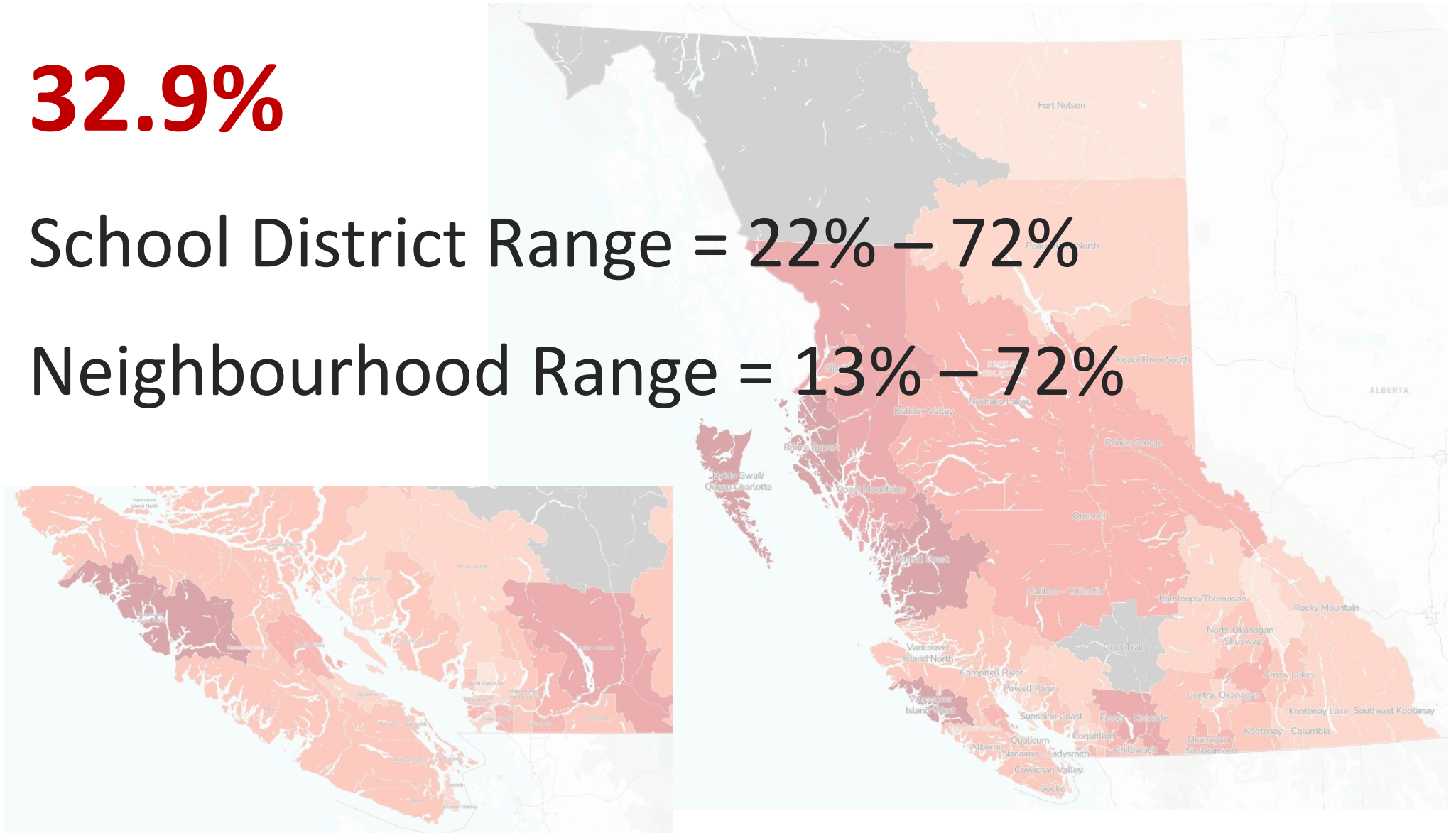
● Overall Vulnerability, BC School Districts: Wave 8



32.9%

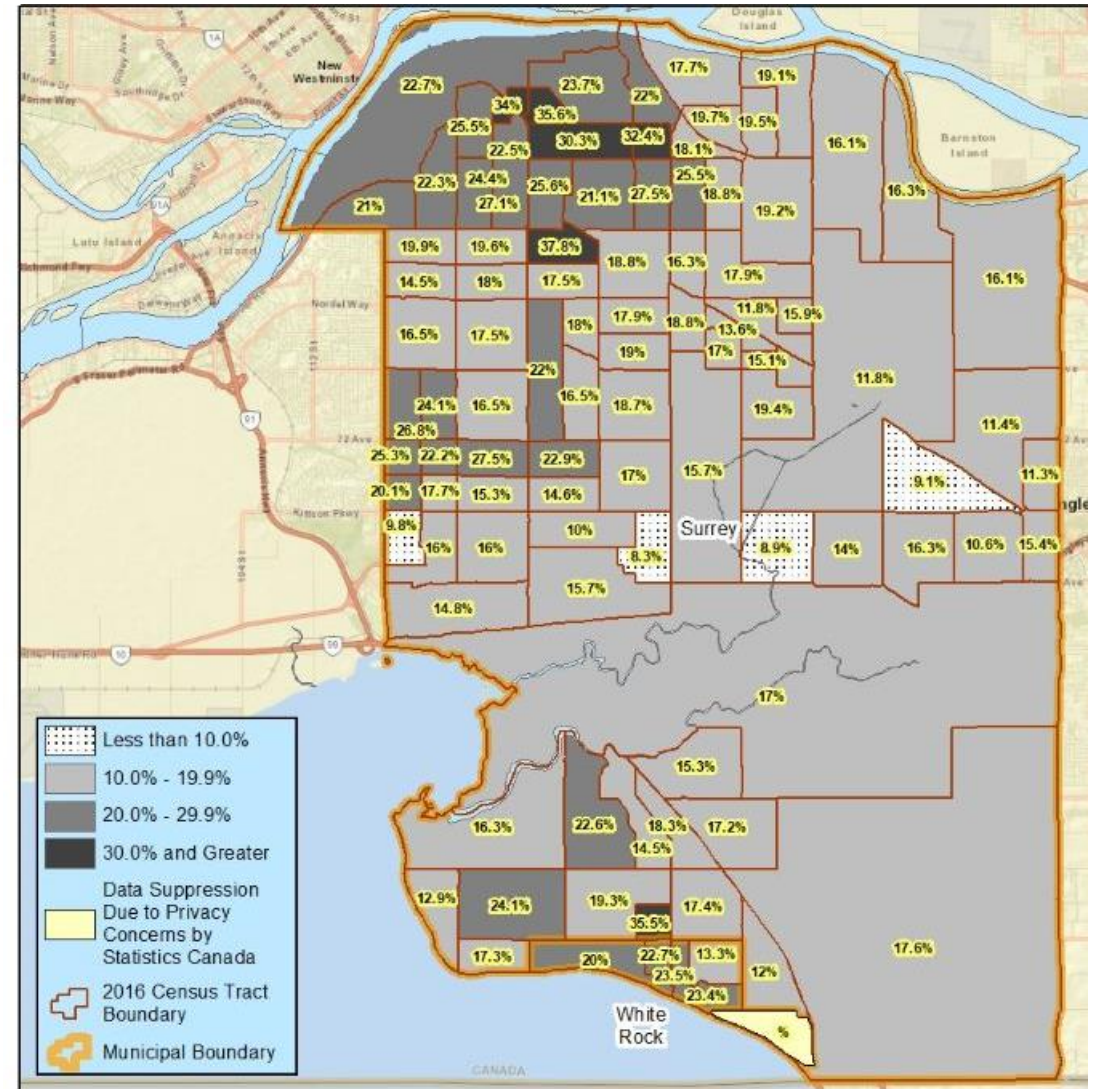
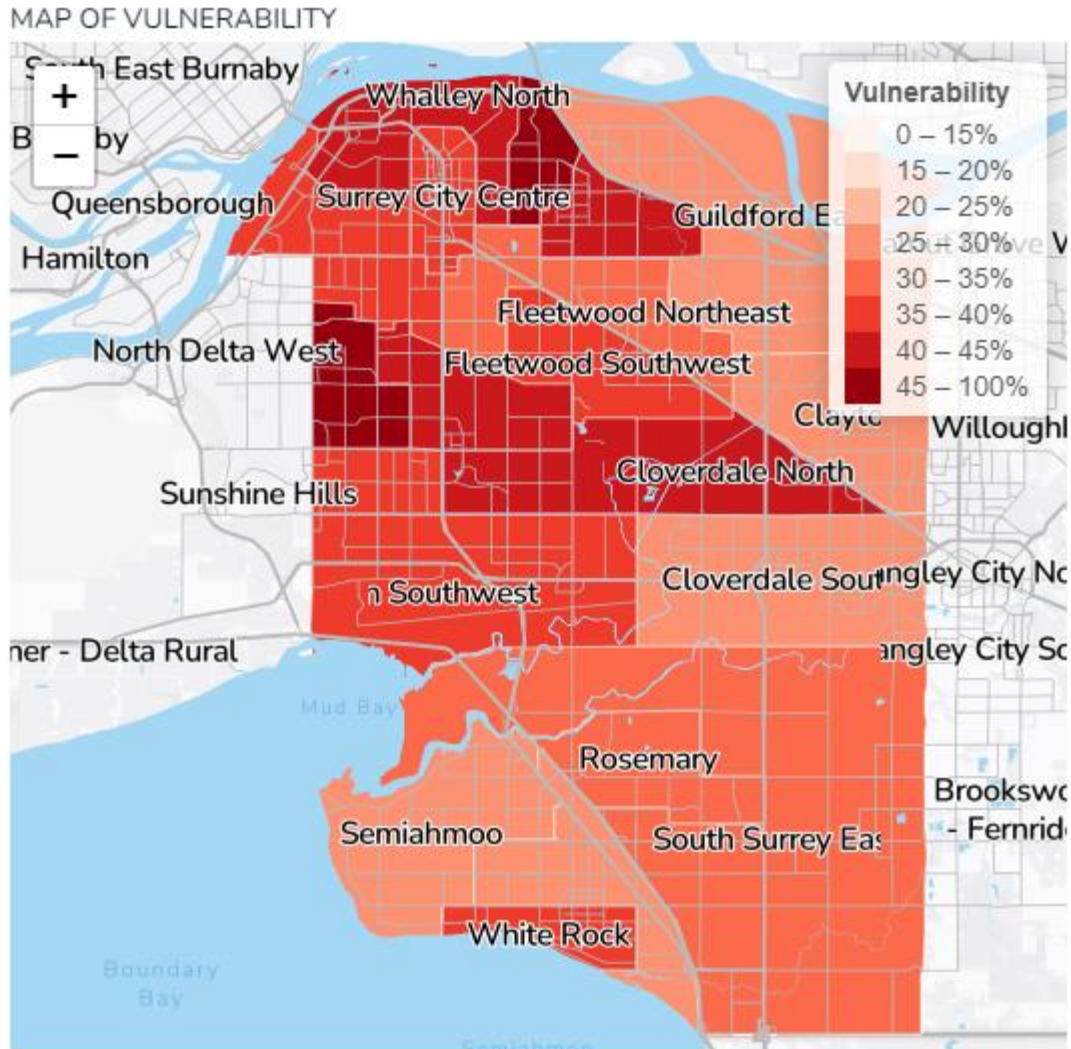
School District Range = 22% – 72%

Neighbourhood Range = 13% – 72%



Surrey EDI Wave 8 (2019-2022) Neighbourhood Overall Vulnerability

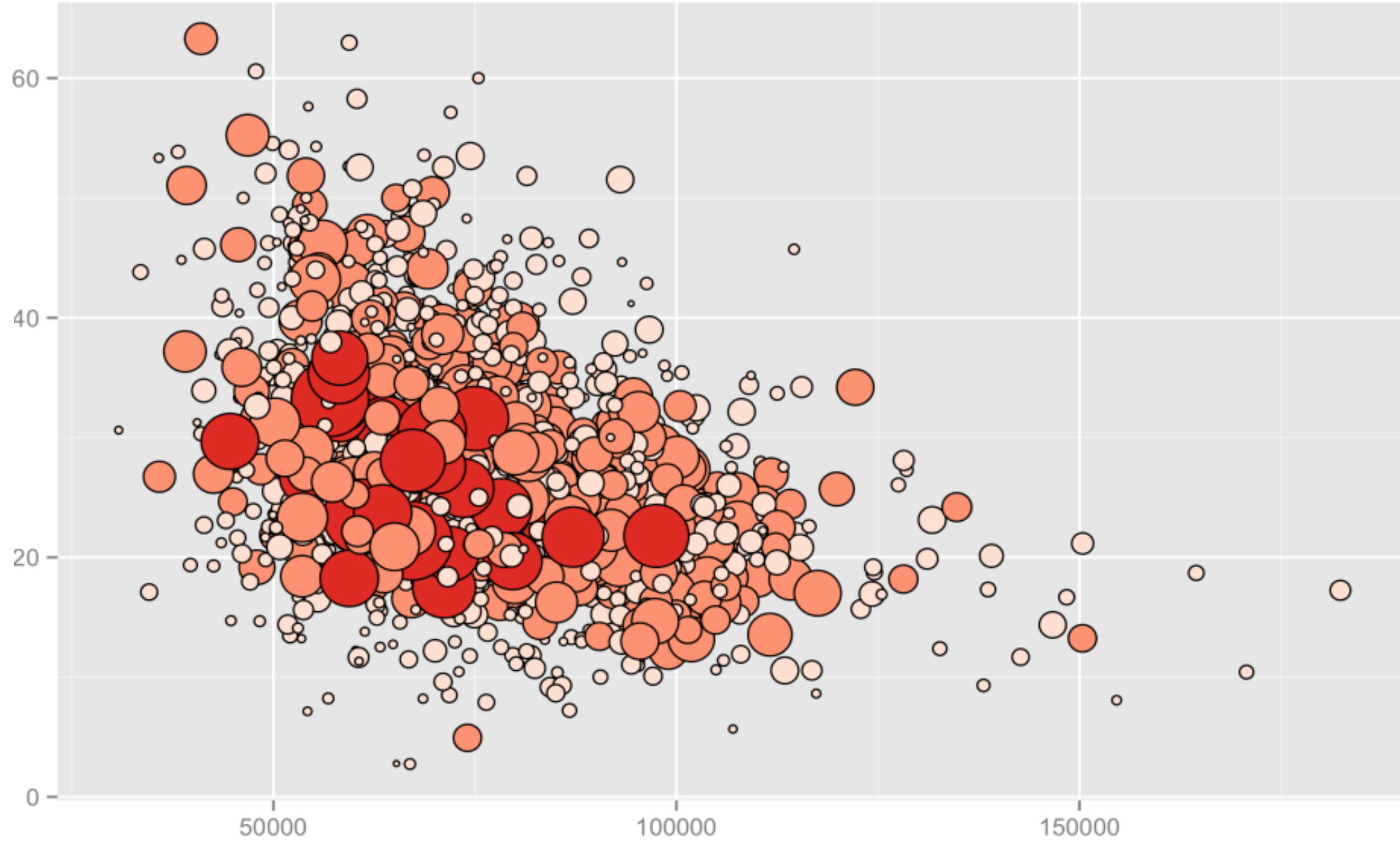
Percent of Children in Low Income Families, Surrey 2019 (First Call Poverty Census Tract Map)



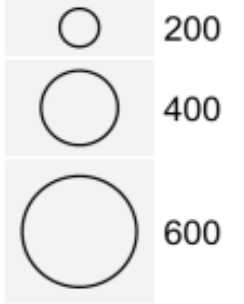
Source: Statistics Canada
Table I-13 After Tax low income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low income measure, CFLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent family composition, 2019

EDI Vulnerability

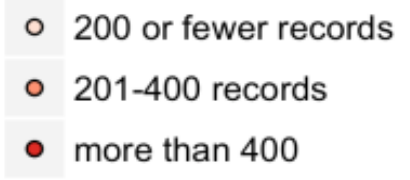
Median Income



temp_N_BREAK

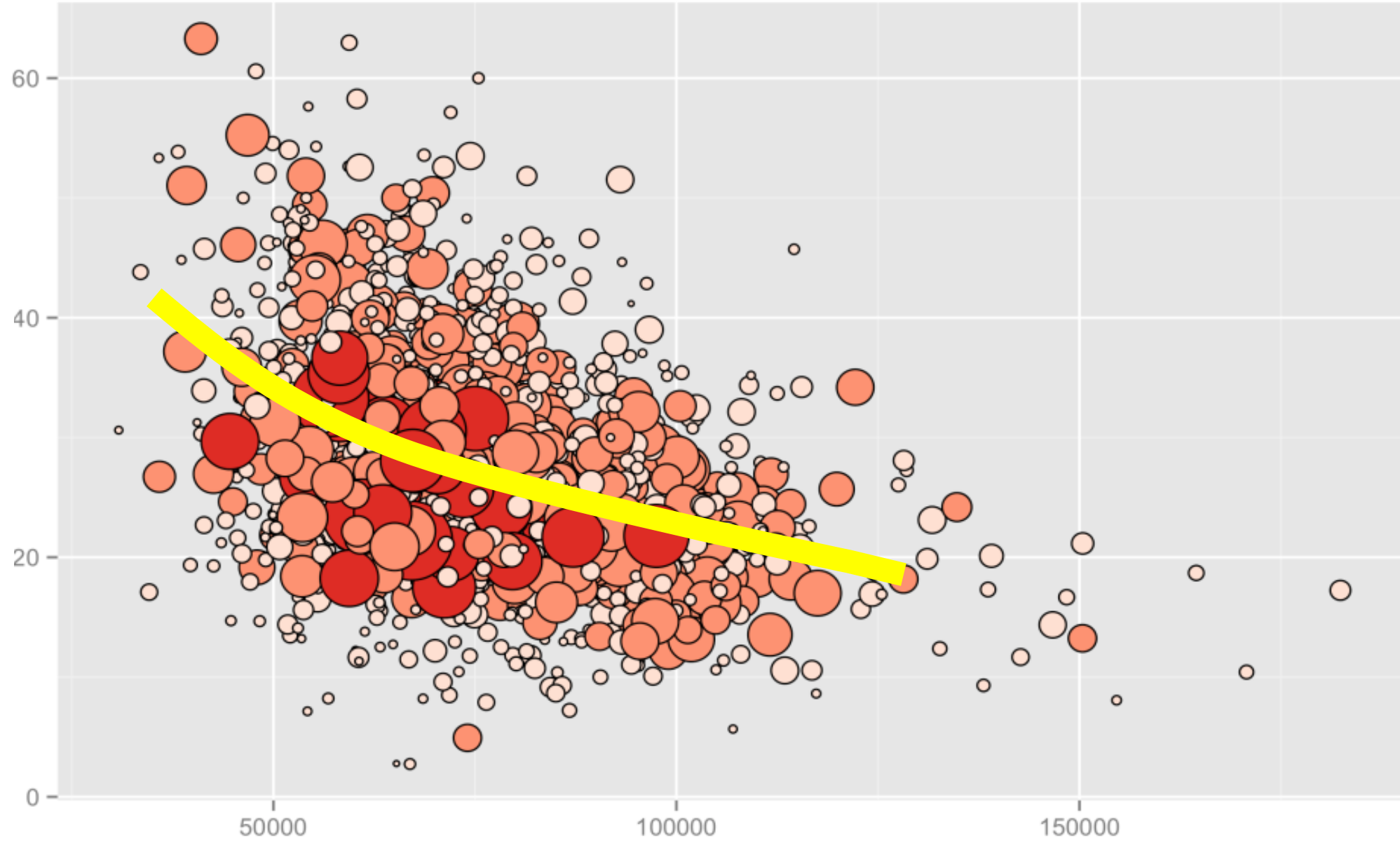


colour_N_BREAK

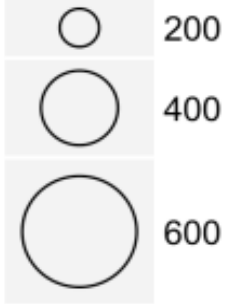


EDI Vulnerability

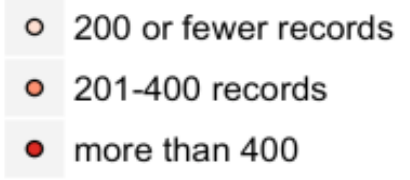
Median Income



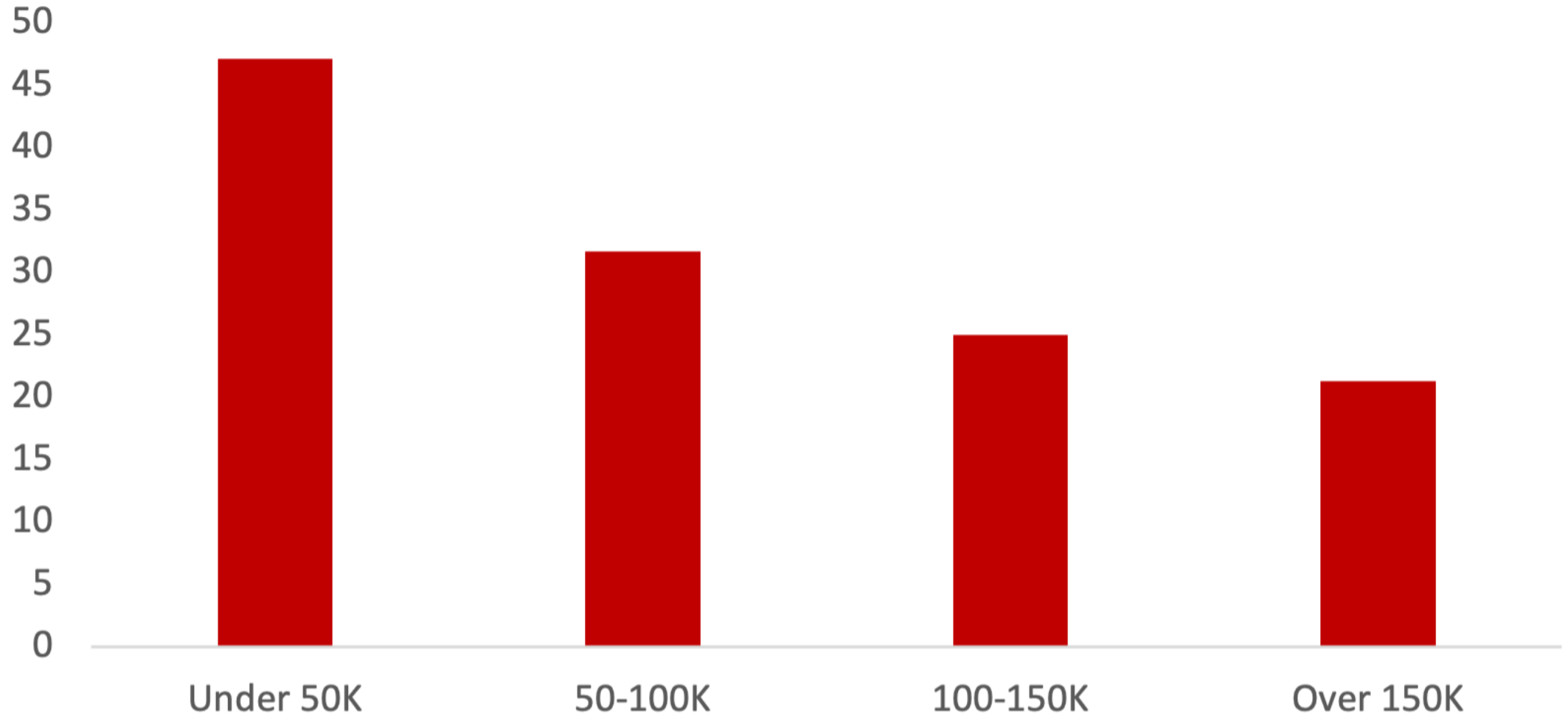
temp_N_BREAK

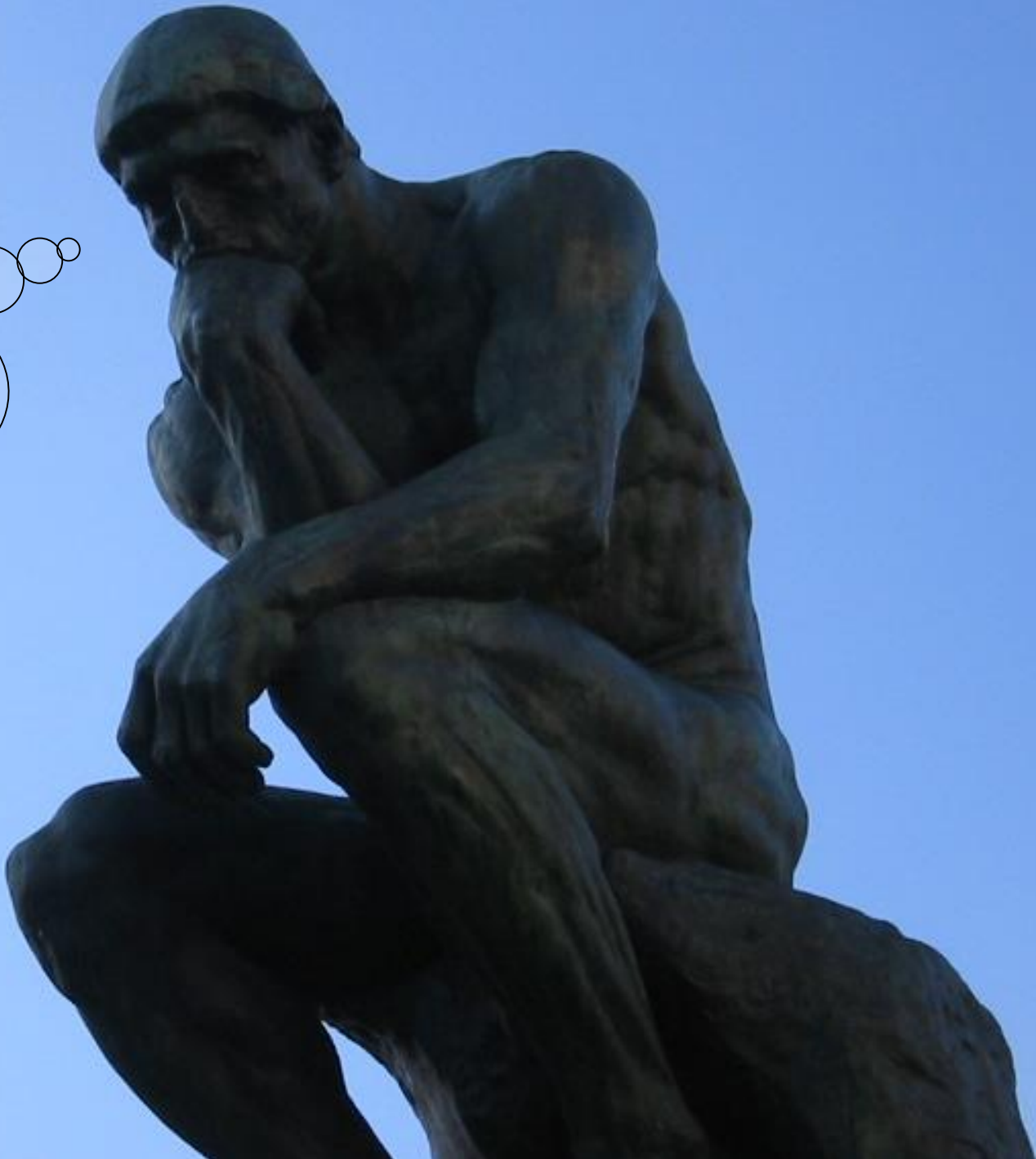


colour_N_BREAK



EDI vulnerability (%) by caregiver-reported household income

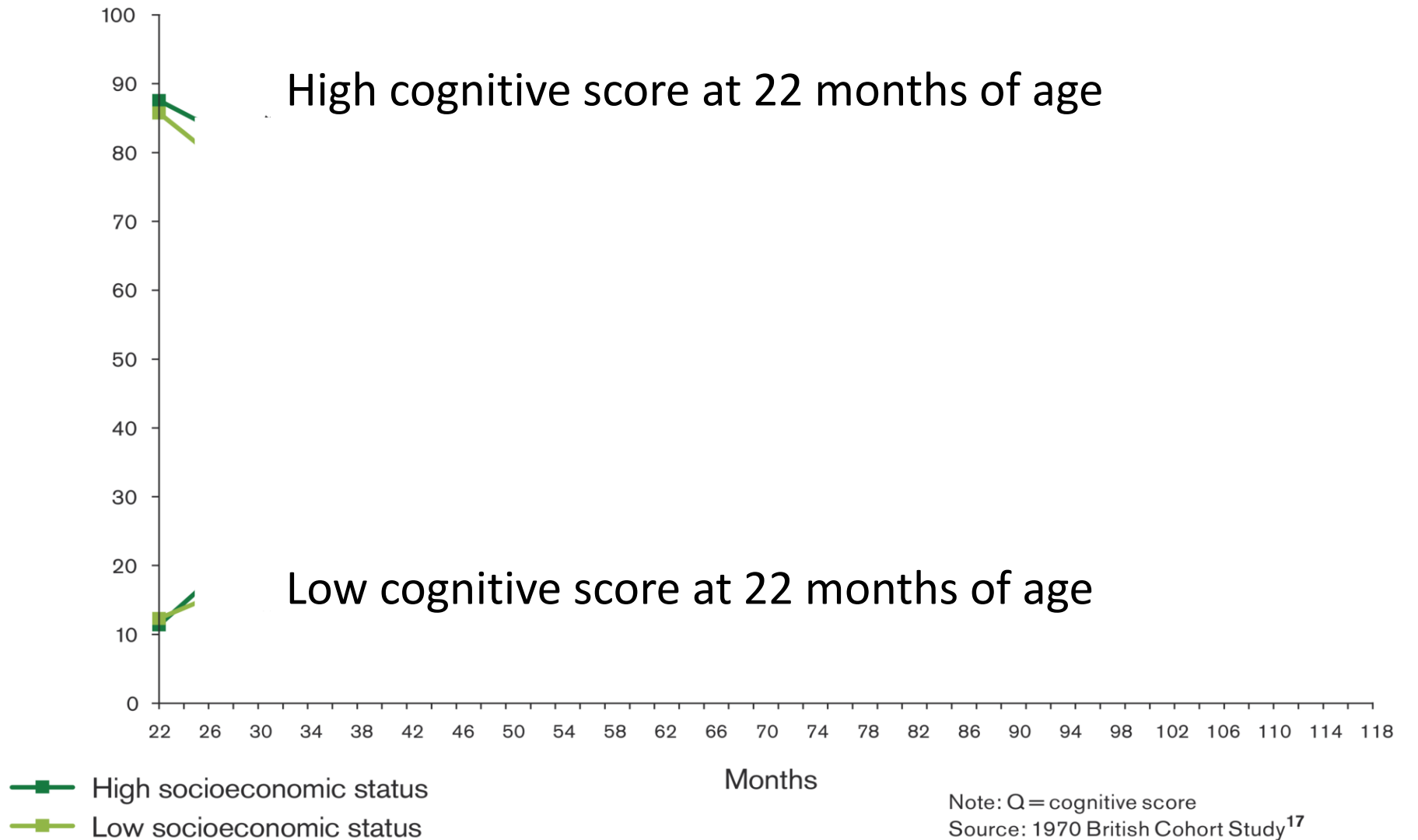




*When & how does
the socioeconomic
gradient emerge?*

Fair Society, Healthy Lives

Average position
in distribution



Fair Society, Healthy Lives

Average position
in distribution

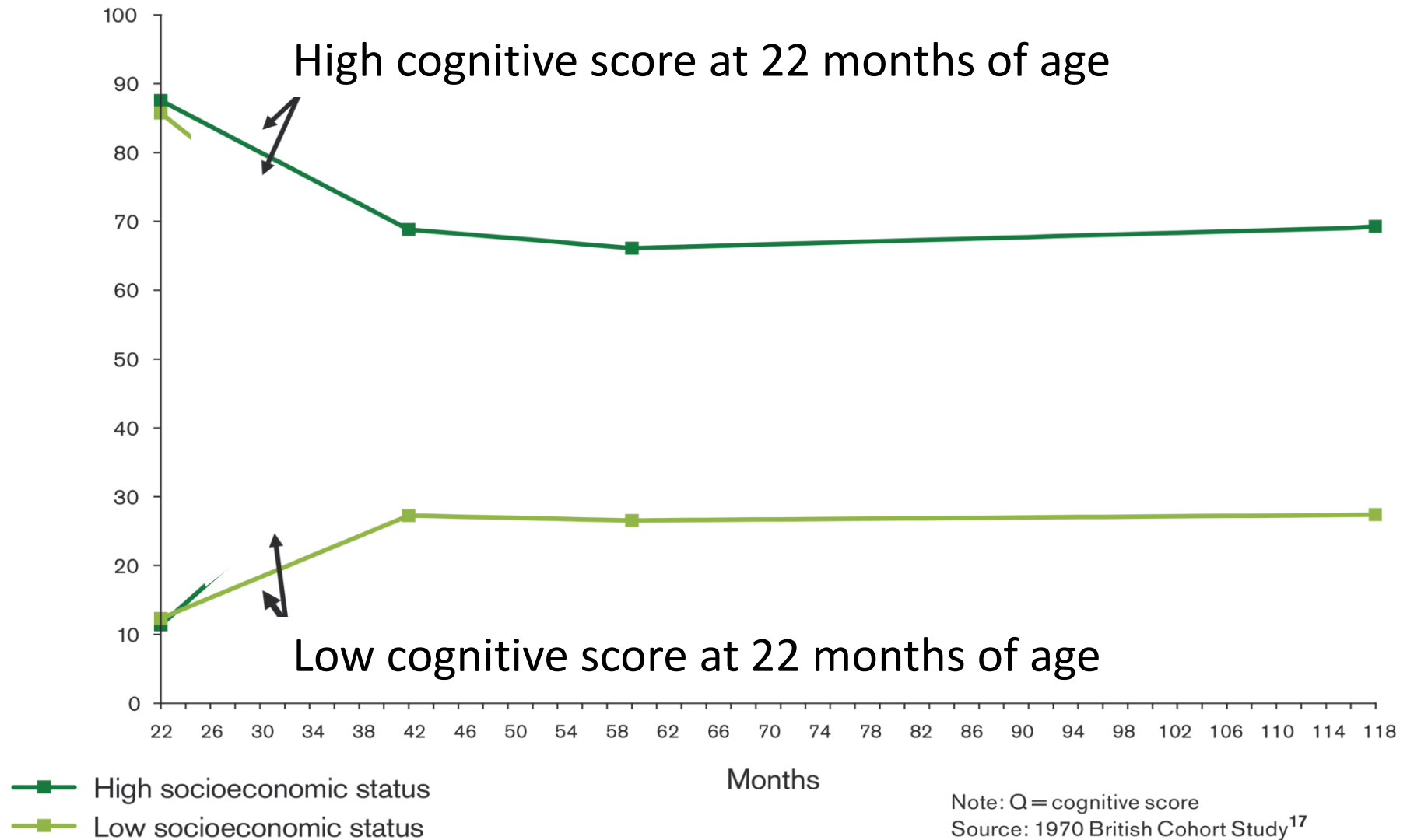


Figure 6 Inequality in early cognitive development of children in the 1970 British Cohort Study, at ages 22 months to 10 years

'Fair Society, Healthy Lives'

<http://www.instituteofhealthequality.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pdf.pdf>

Average position in distribution

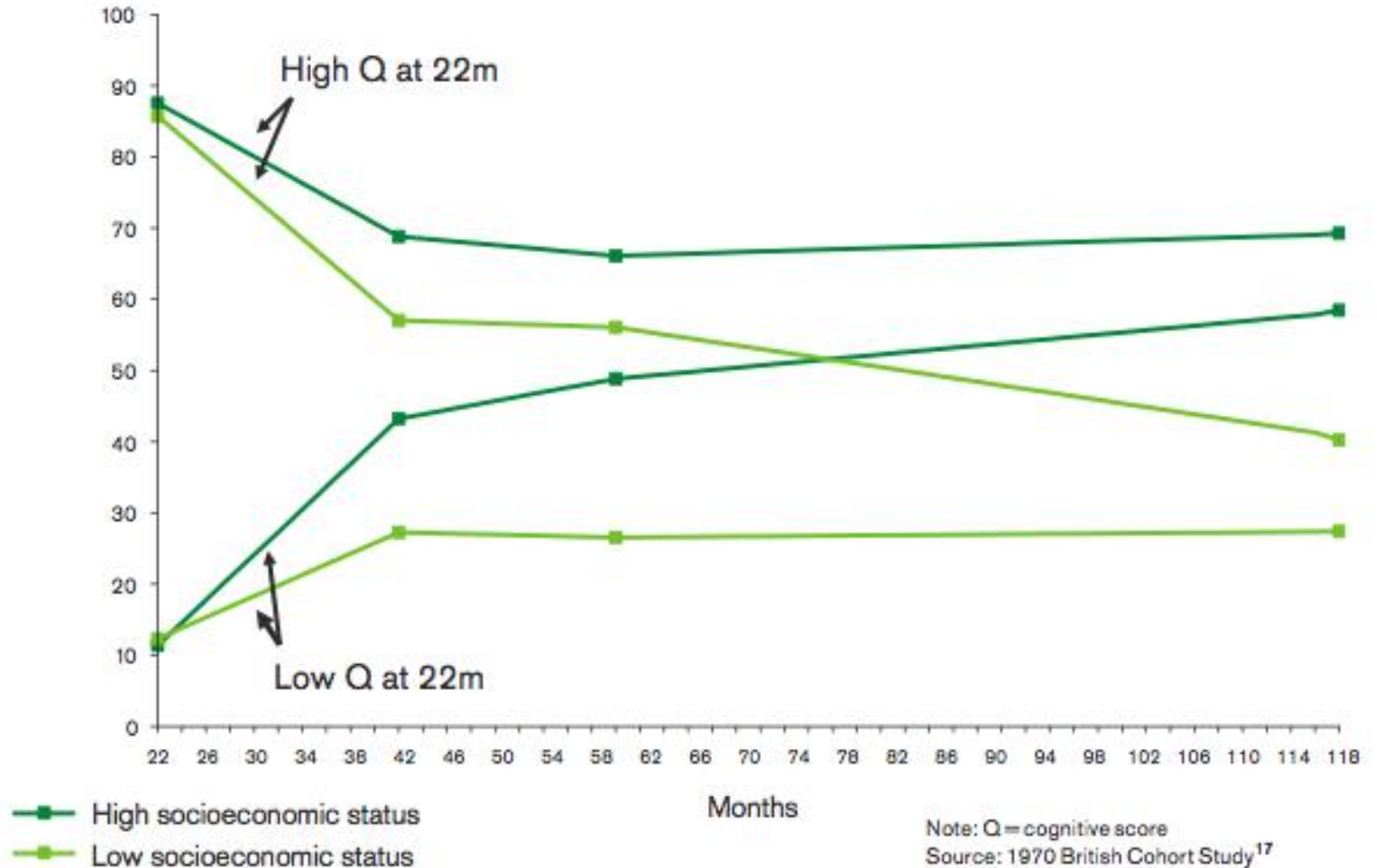
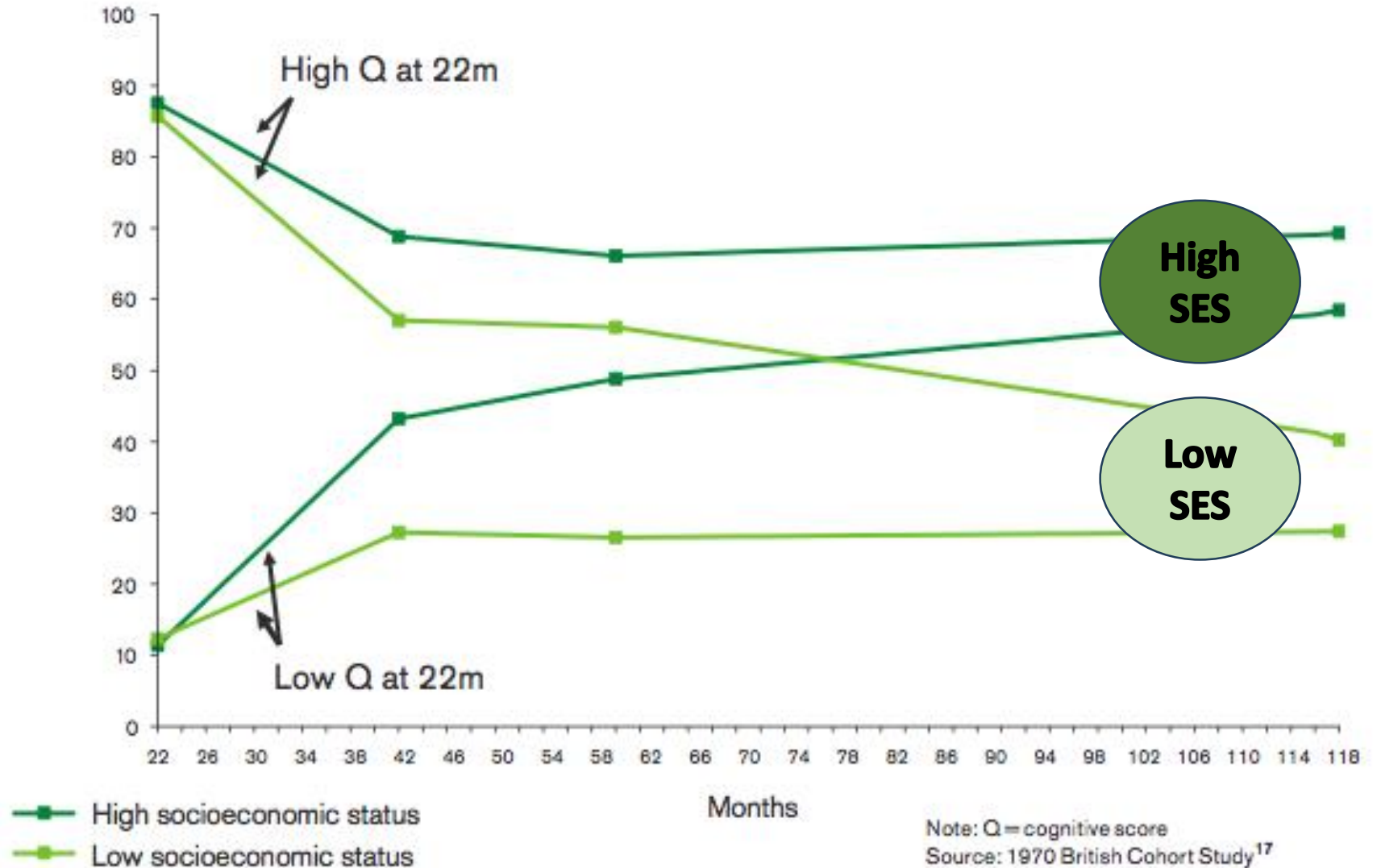


Figure 6 Inequality in early cognitive development of children in the 1970 British Cohort Study, at ages 22 months to 10 years

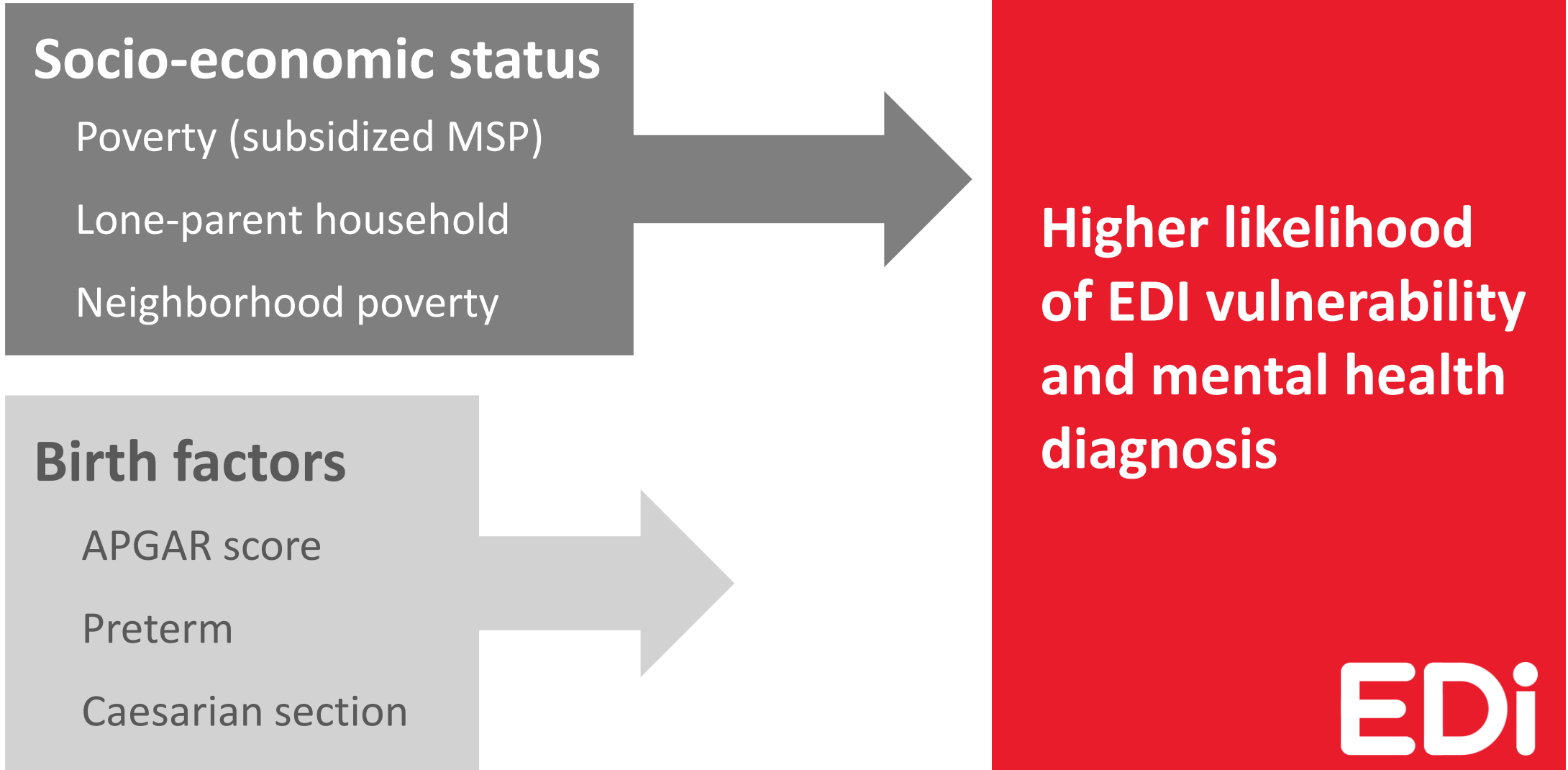
'Fair Society, Healthy Lives'

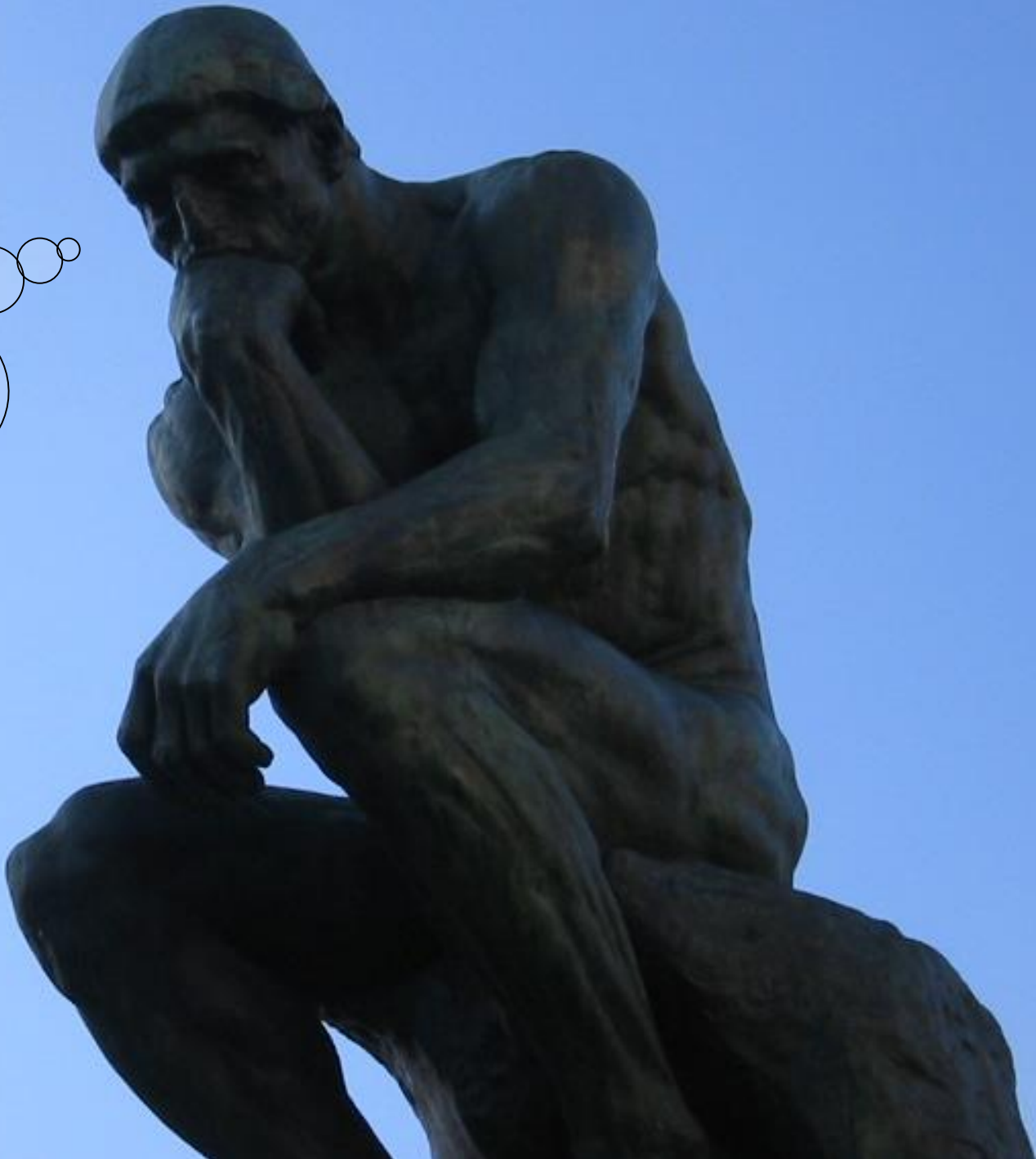
<http://www.instituteofhealthequality.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pdf.pdf>

Average position in distribution



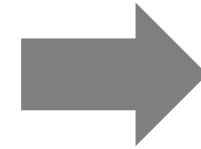
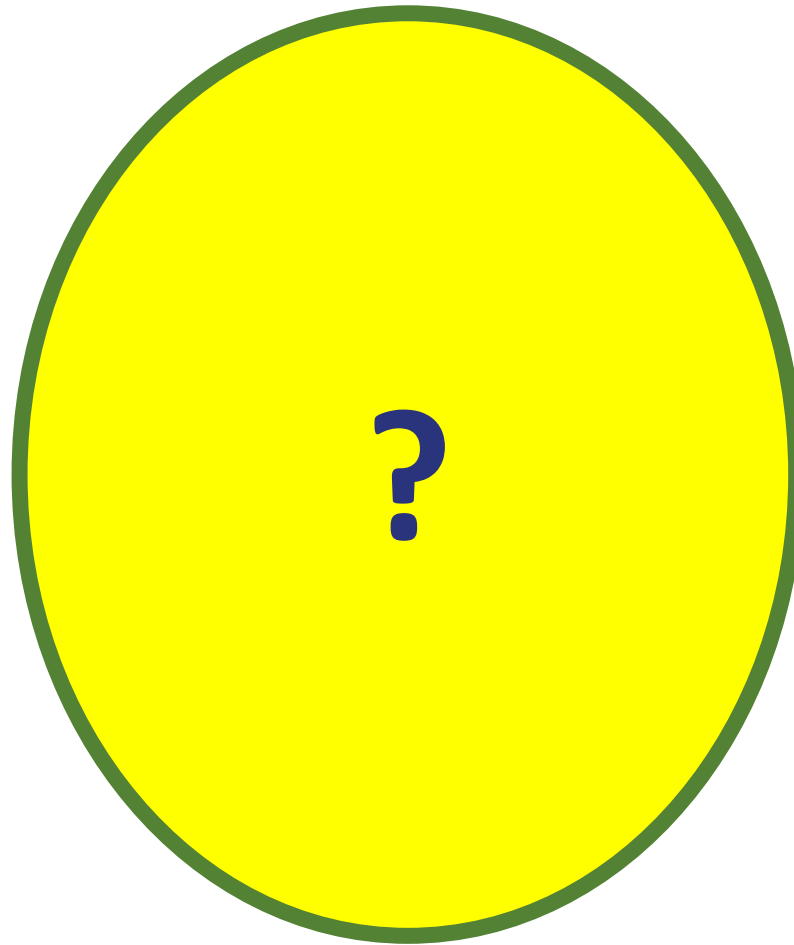
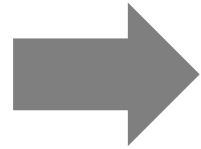
Linking Birth Factors and SES with Early Emotional Development and Mental Health





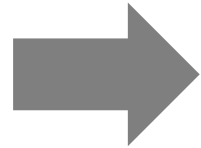
*What links
SES/income to
outcomes?*

Social
Determinants
of Health
(e.g., income)

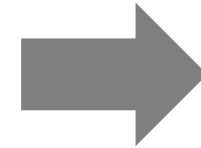


Child
development
& well-being

Social
Determinants
of Health
(e.g., income)

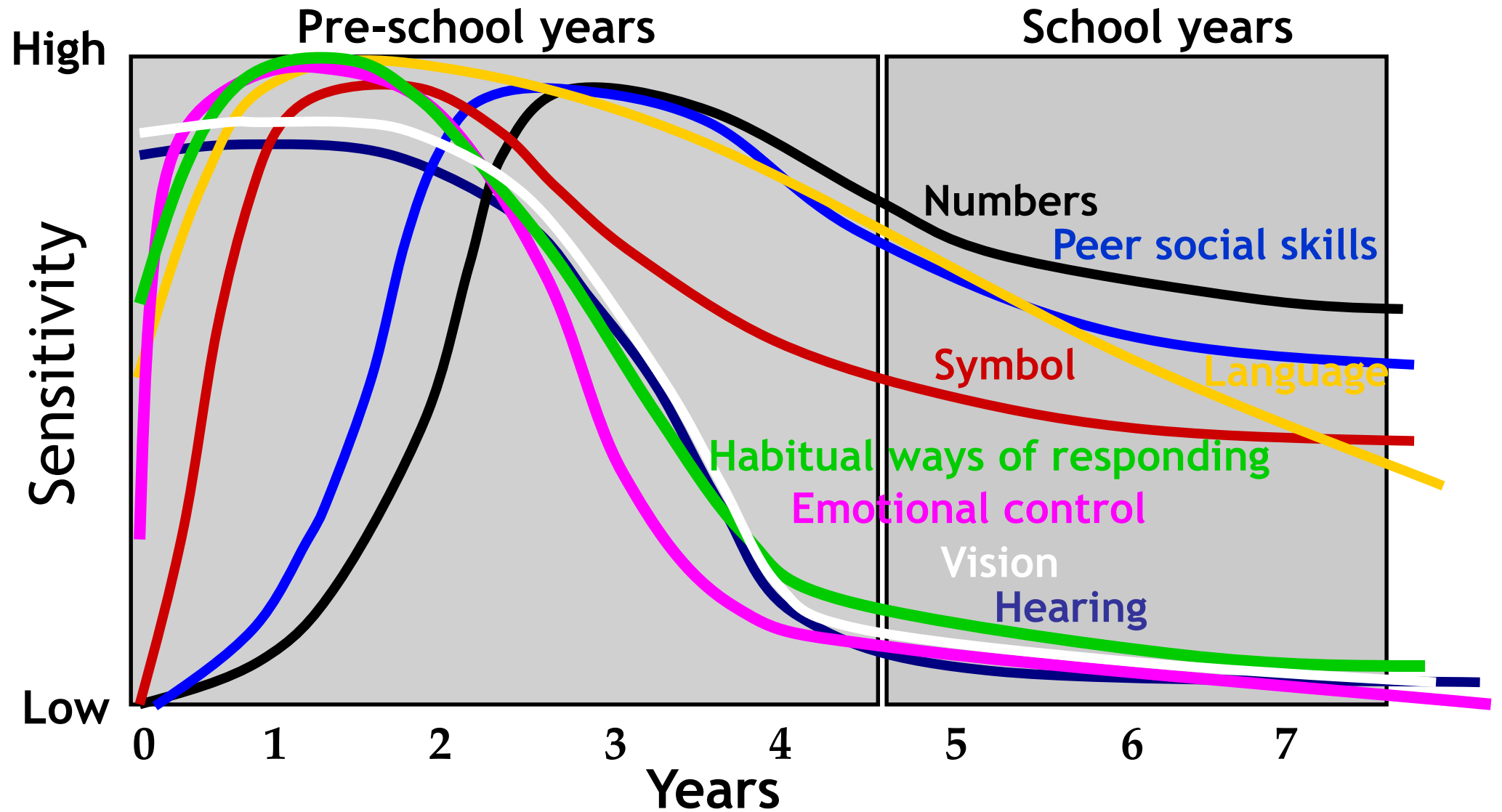


Daily
experiences of
children and
families



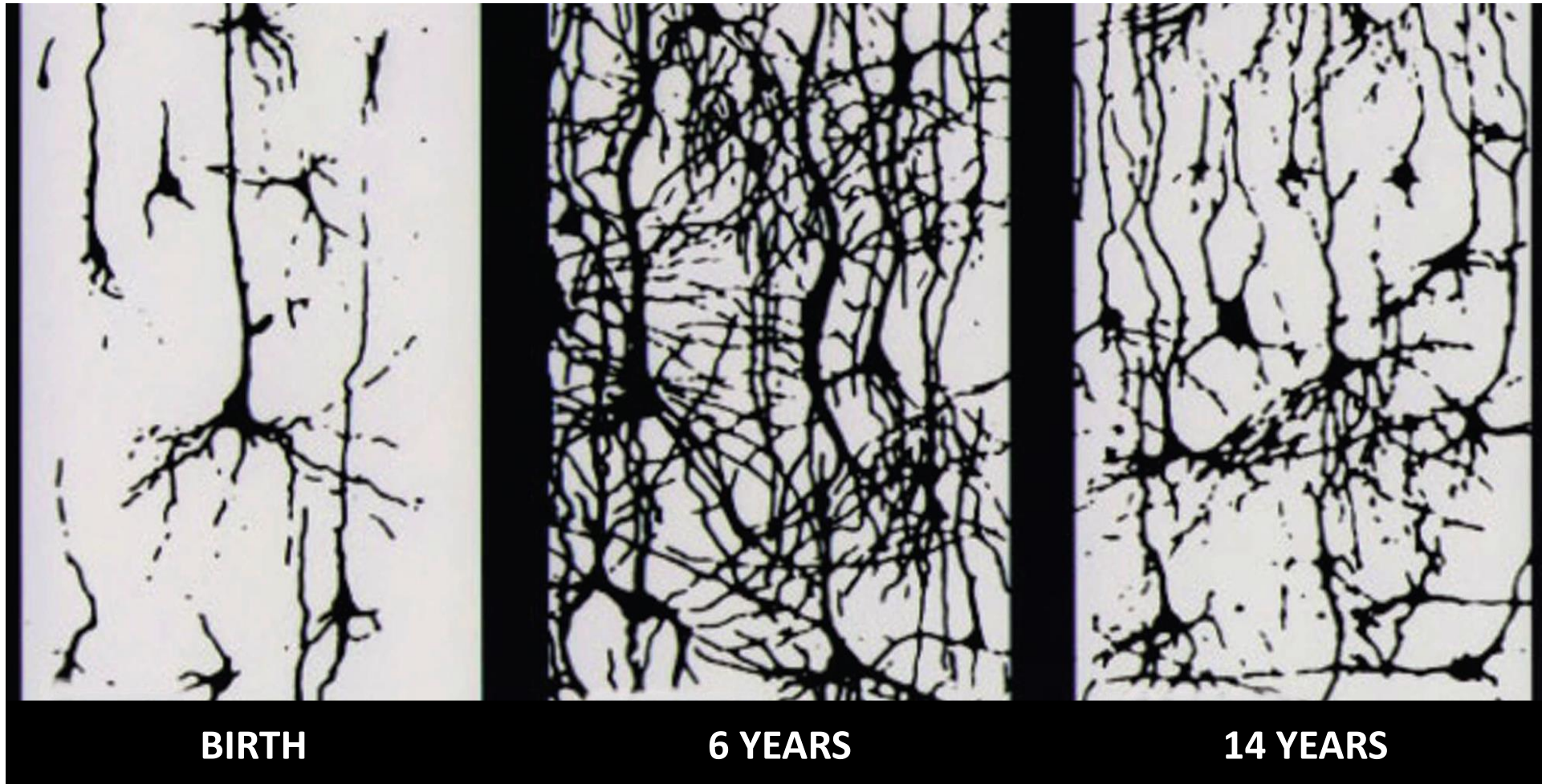
Child
development
& well-being

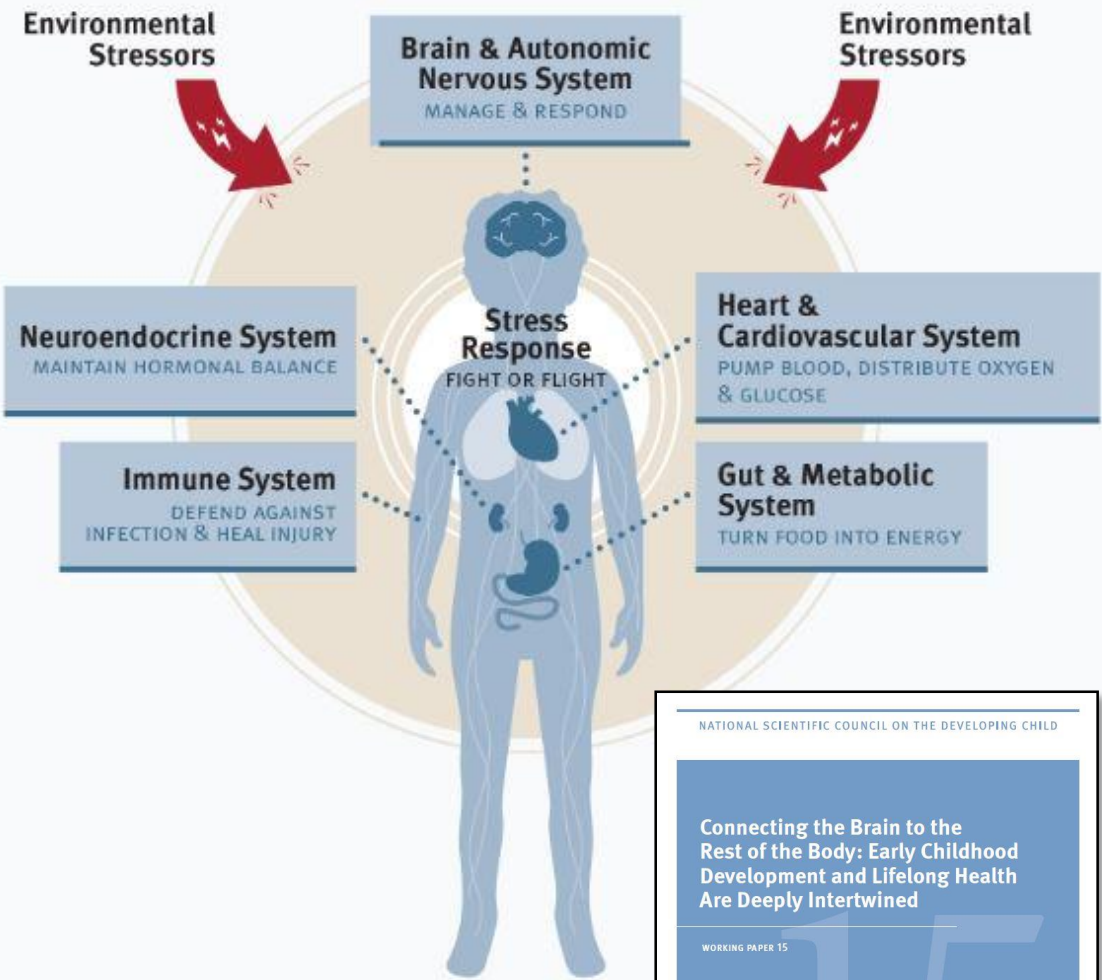
Sensitive Periods in Early Brain Development



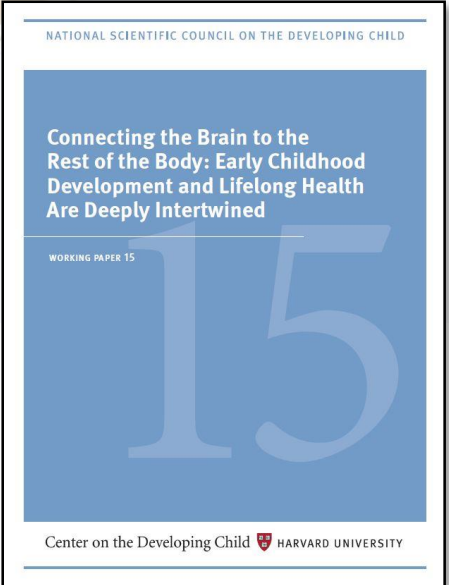
Graph developed by Council for Early Child Development (ref: Nash, 1997; *Early Years Study*, 1999; Shonkoff, 2000.)

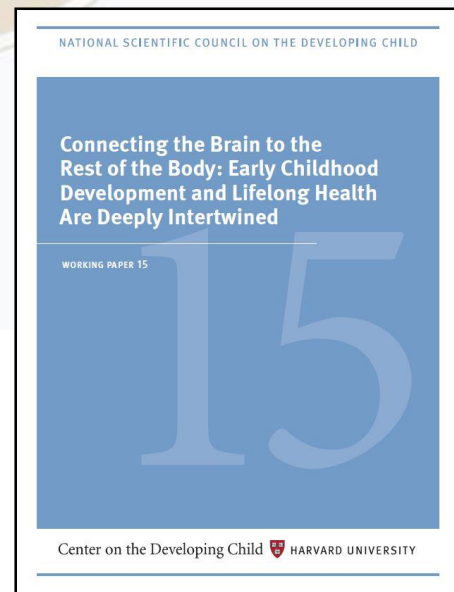
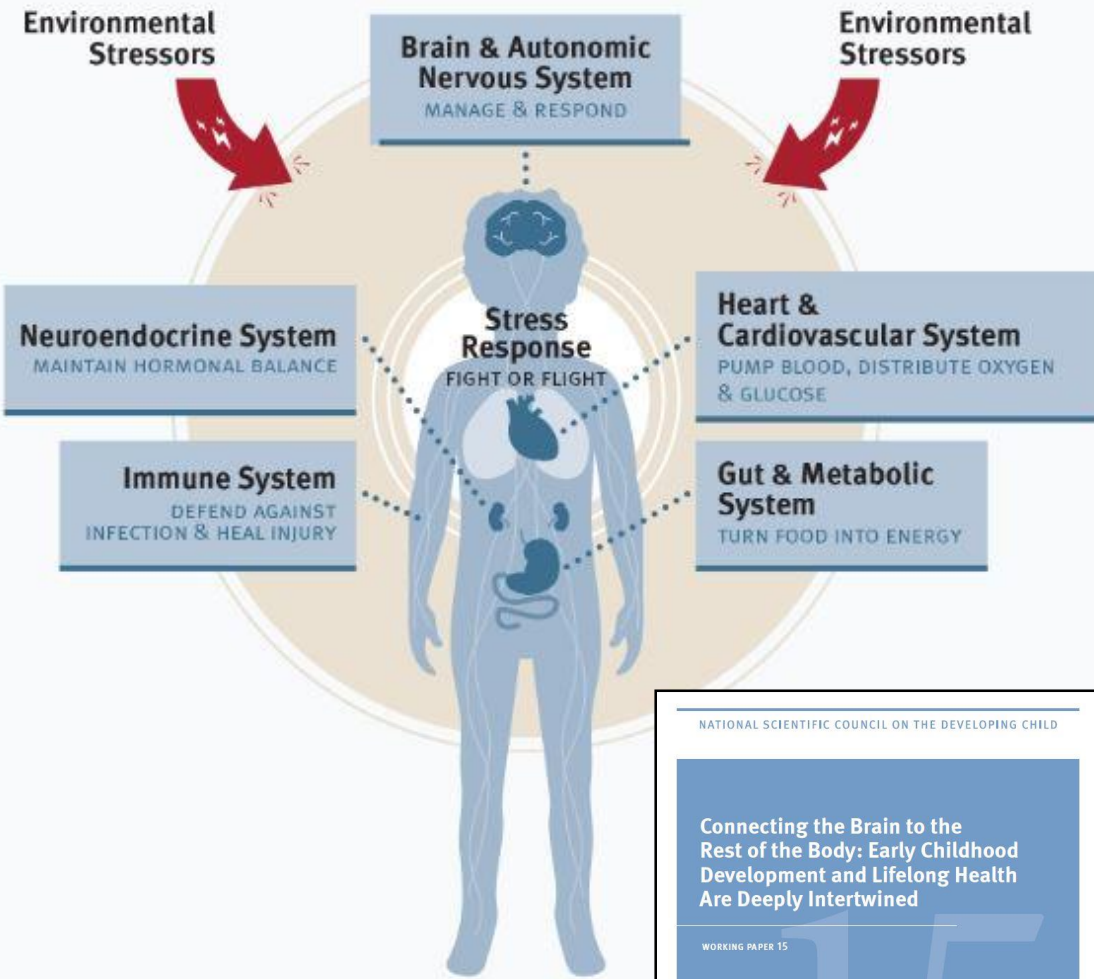
Early brain development and pruning





Relationship between early experiences and later health outcomes.





Relationship between early experiences and later health outcomes.

The environments we create and the experiences we provide for young children and their families affect not just the developing brain, but also many other physiological systems, from cardiovascular function and immune responsiveness to metabolic regulation.

Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2020

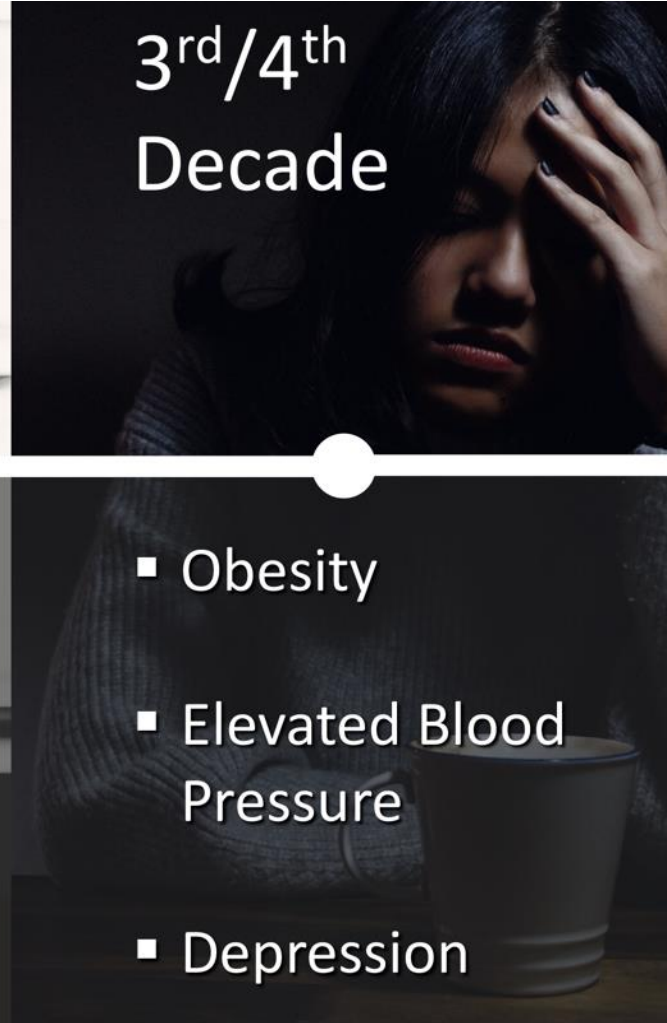
THE LONG REACH OF EARLY EXPERIENCE...

2nd Decade



- School Failure
- Teen Pregnancy
- Criminality

3rd/4th Decade



- Obesity
- Elevated Blood Pressure
- Depression

5th/6th Decade




- Coronary Heart Disease
- Diabetes

Old Age



- Premature Aging
- Memory Loss

A young child with curly brown hair, wearing a blue dress and a purple bracelet, stands on a beach with hands outstretched. The child is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a blurred beach scene.

What are children's
day-to-day experiences
in BC?

Income

in

equality

childhood experiences



Child Development Monitoring System



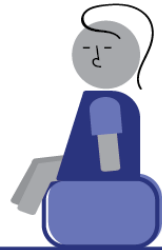
TDi

**Toddler
Development
Instrument**

1-2 Years

Parent & caregiver
questionnaire

**EARLY EXPERIENCES
& CONTEXTS**



CHEQ

**Childhood
Experiences
Questionnaire**

Start of kindergarten

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**EARLY EXPERIENCES
& CONTEXTS**



EDi

**Early
Development
Instrument**

Mid-kindergarten

Teacher
questionnaire

**SKILLS &
COMPETENCES**



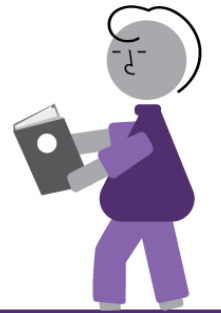
MDi

**Middle Years
Development
Instrument**

Grades 4 - 8

Student
questionnaire

**WELL-BEING
& ASSETS**



YDi

**Youth
Development
Instrument**

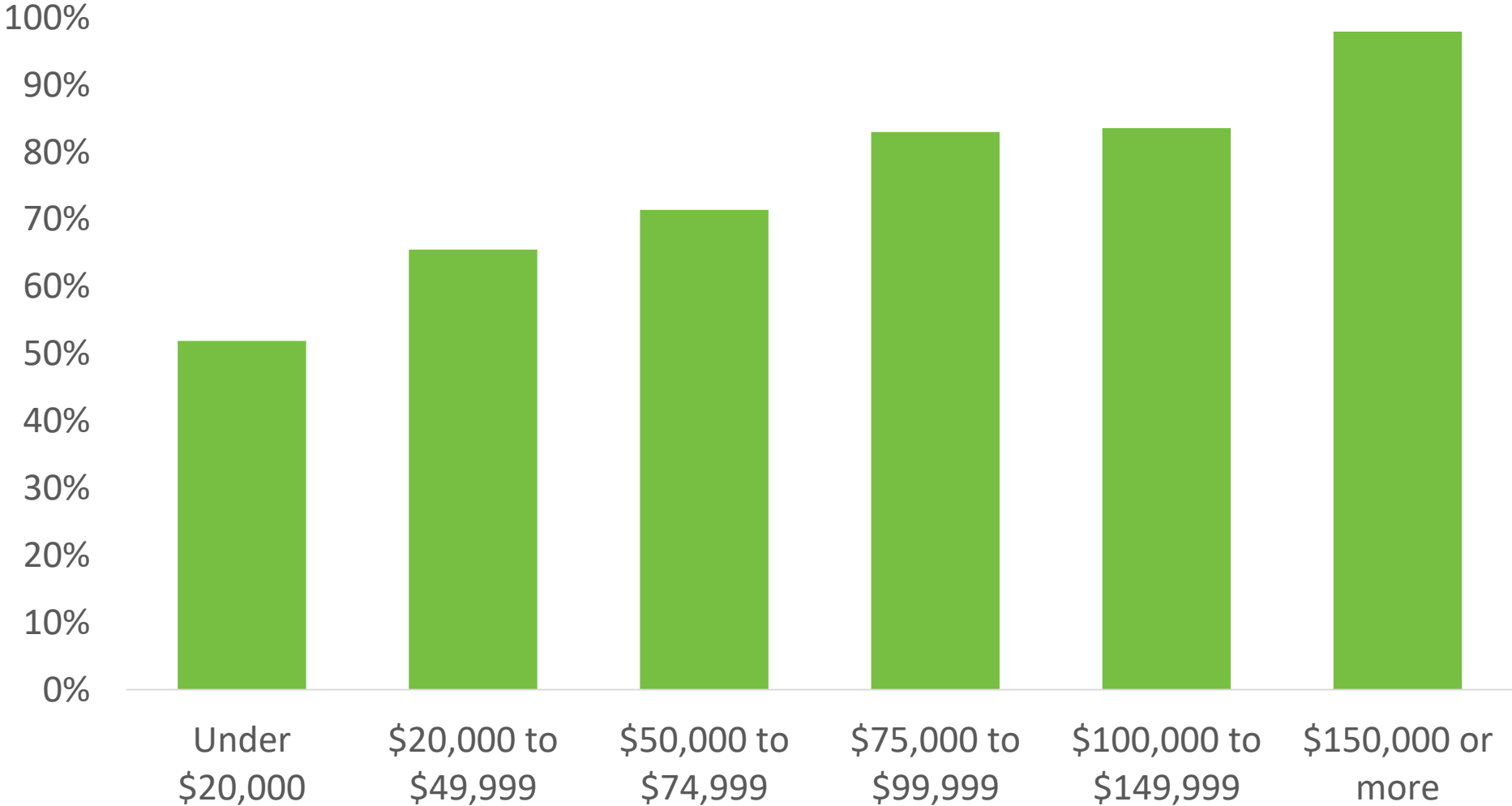
Grades 10-12

Student
questionnaire

**WELL-BEING
& ASSETS**



Reading/telling stories One or more times a day and income level





Reading/telling stories One or more times a day and income level

2 parents, 2 children
Vancouver





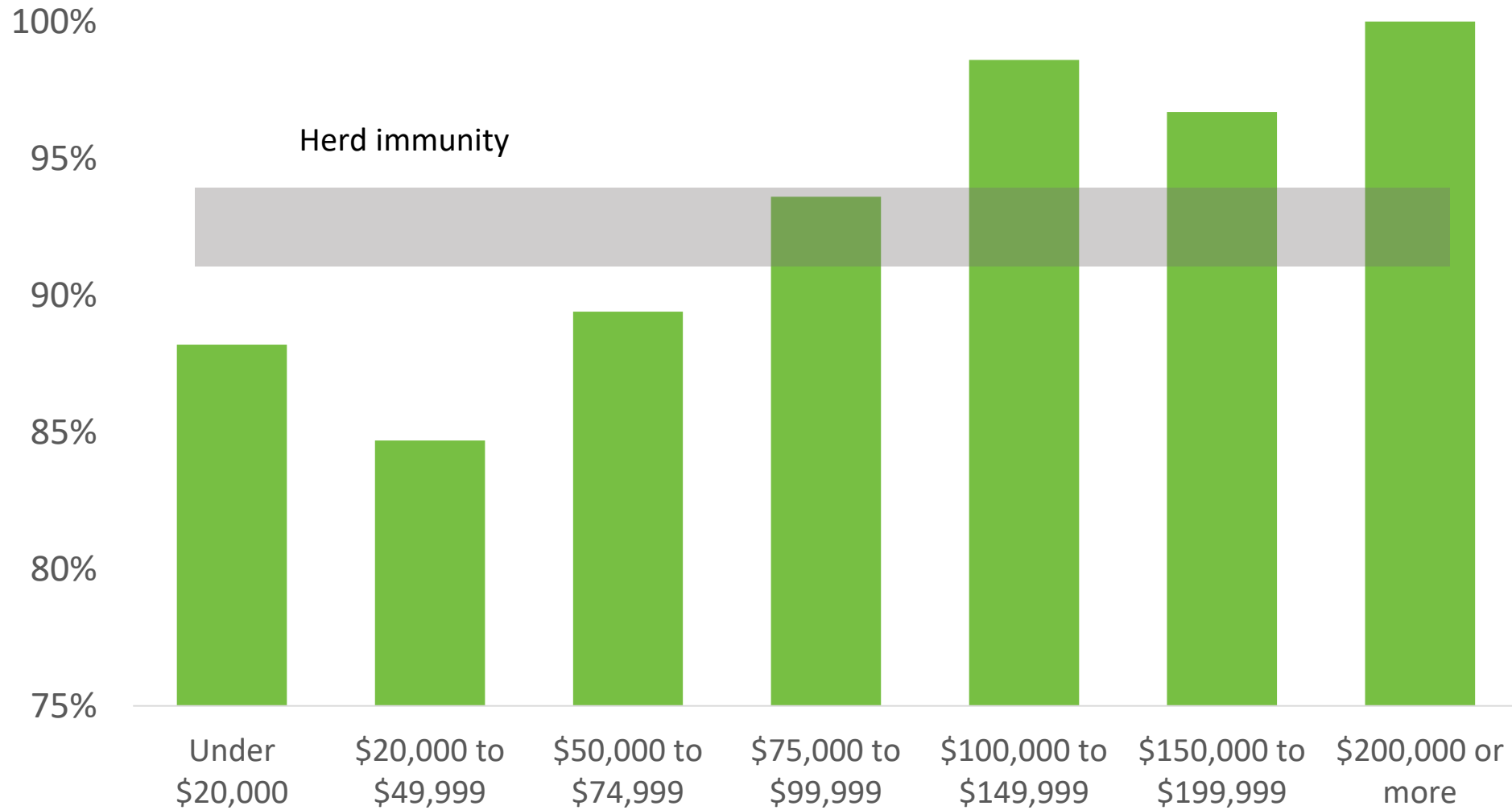
Water consumption more than once per day and income level





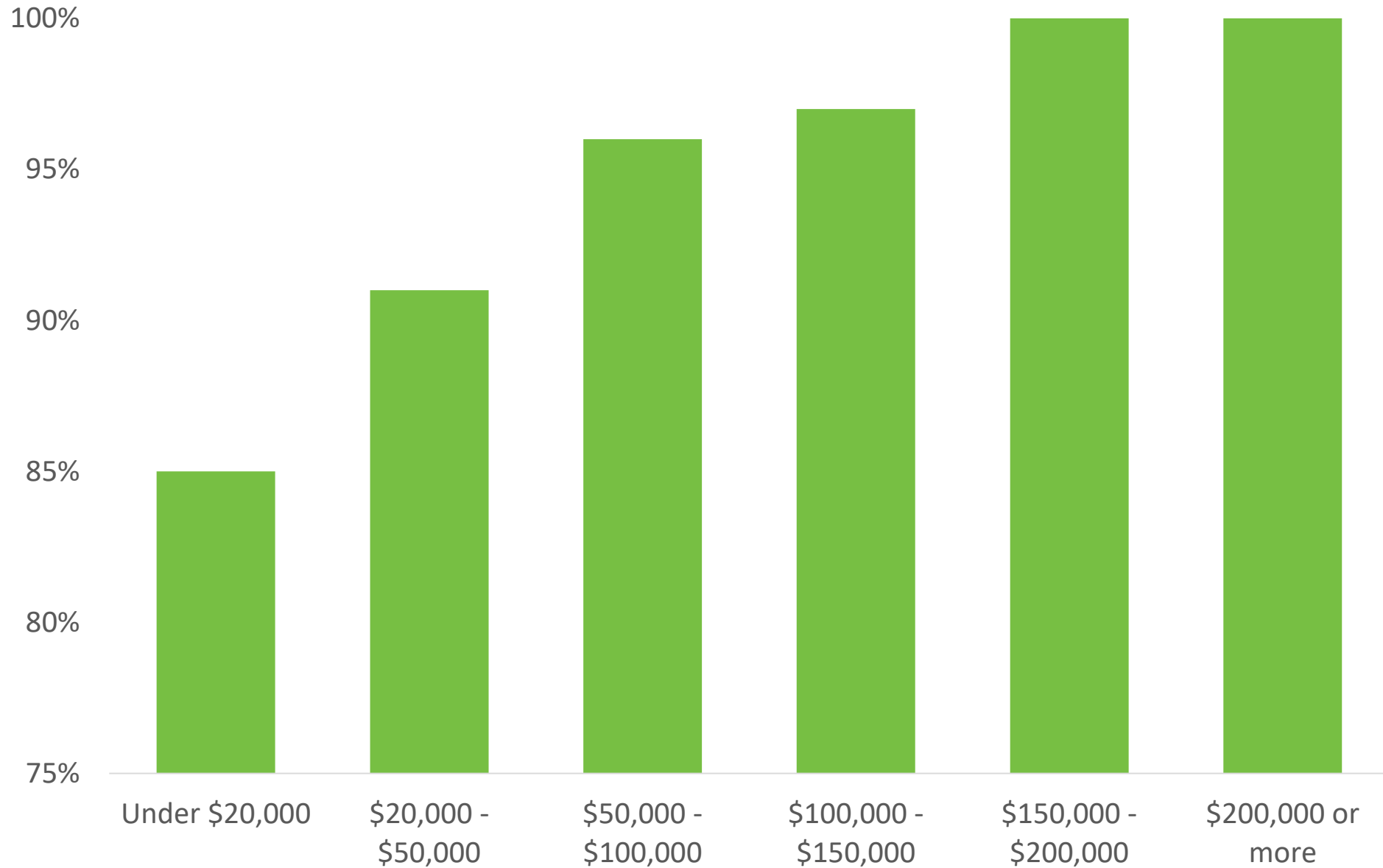
Immunizations

Completed Recommended Immunizations and Income



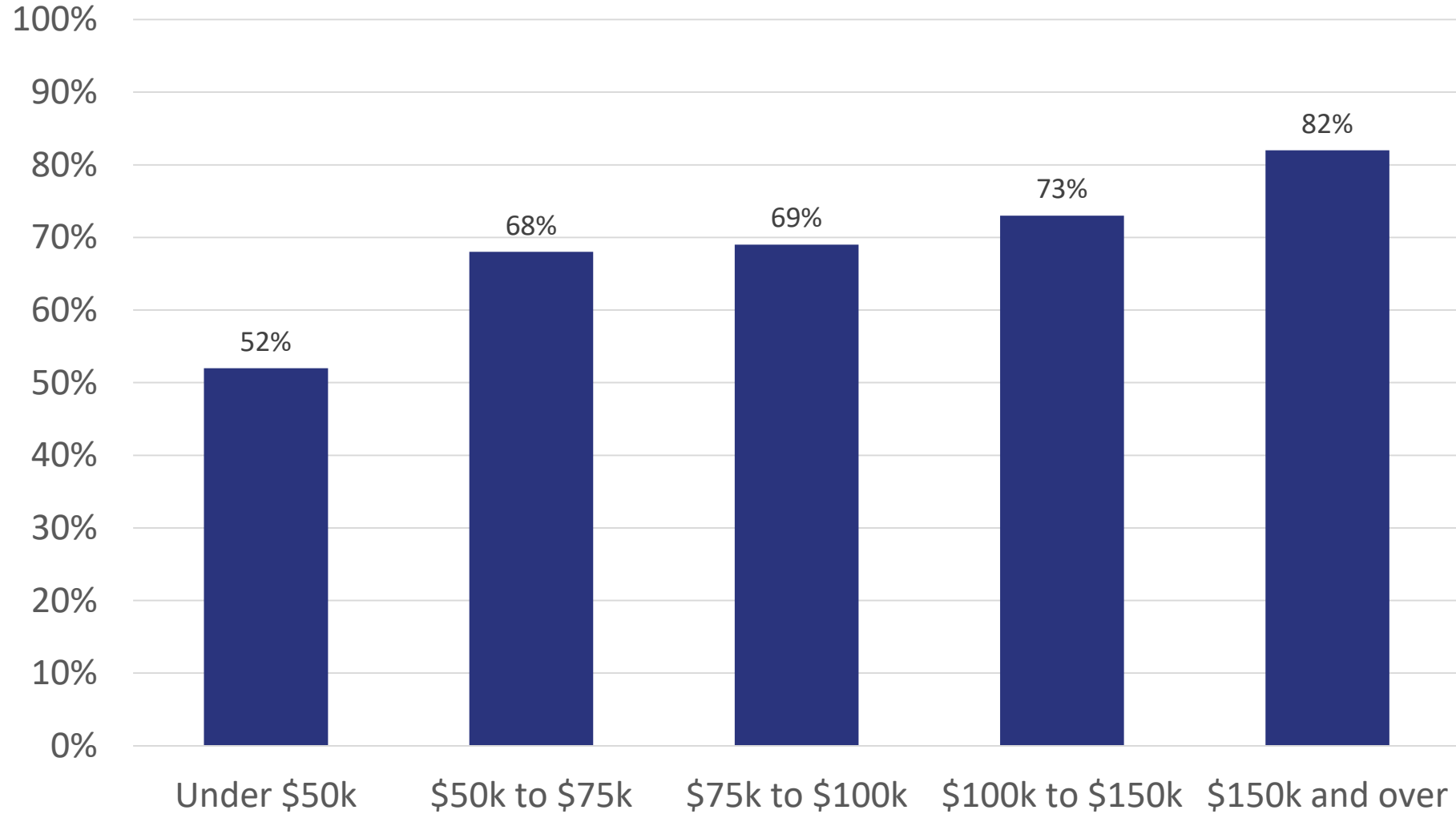


Has your child ever had her/his teeth checked by a professional?

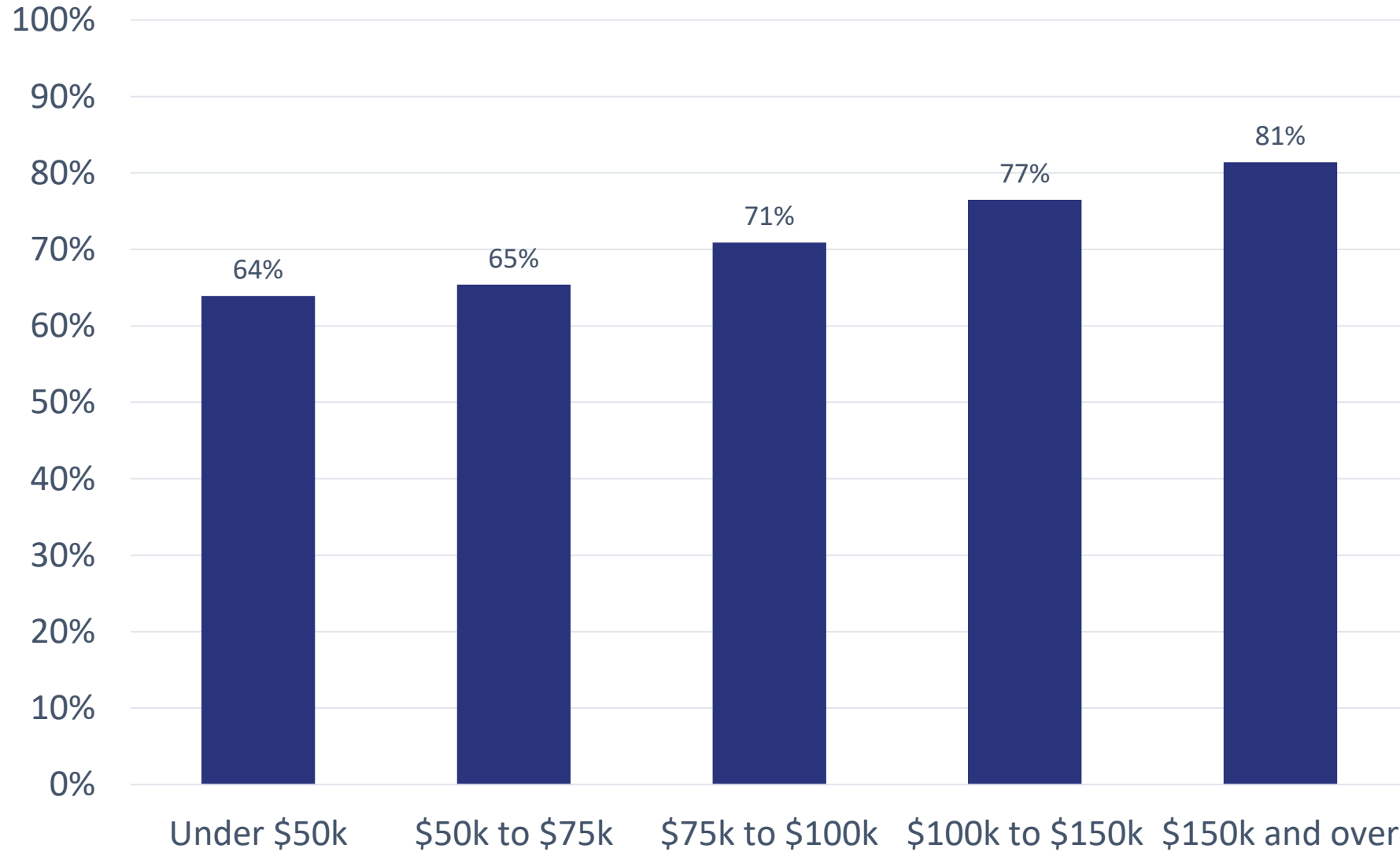




Reading Books/Telling Stories by Family Income (Data 2017-2020)

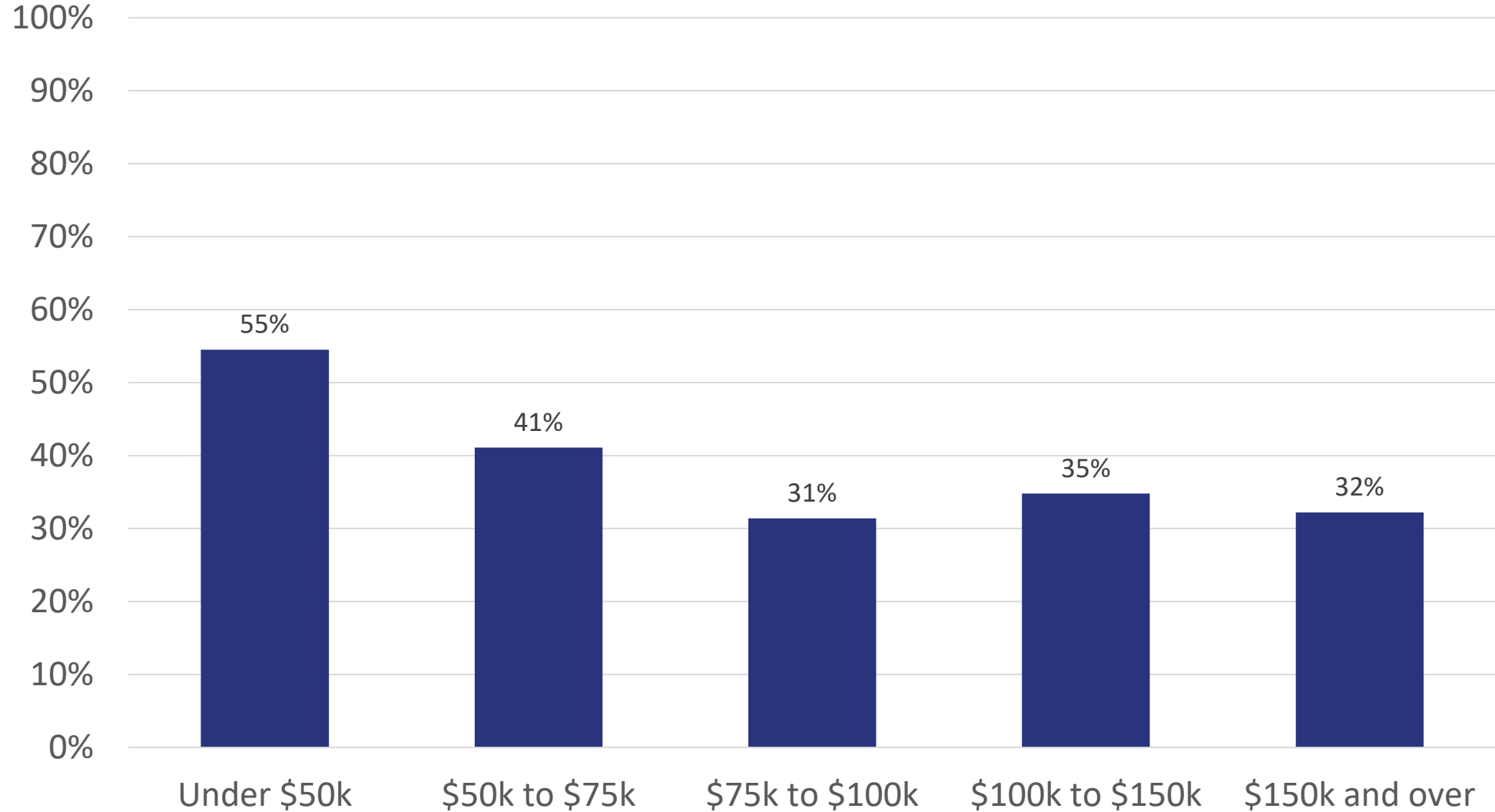


Neighbourhood Support by Family Income (Data 2017-2020)



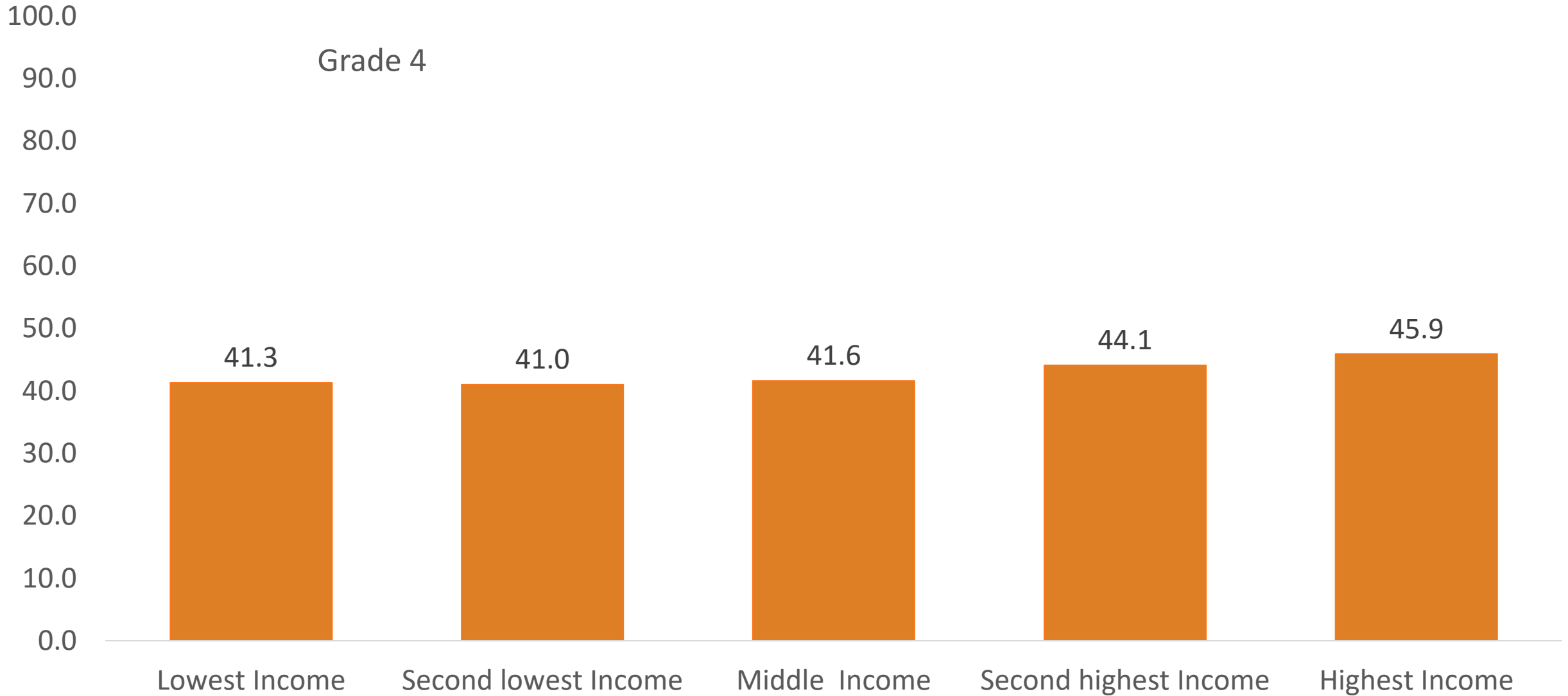


Screen Time, 2+ hours/day by Family Income (Data 2017-2020)



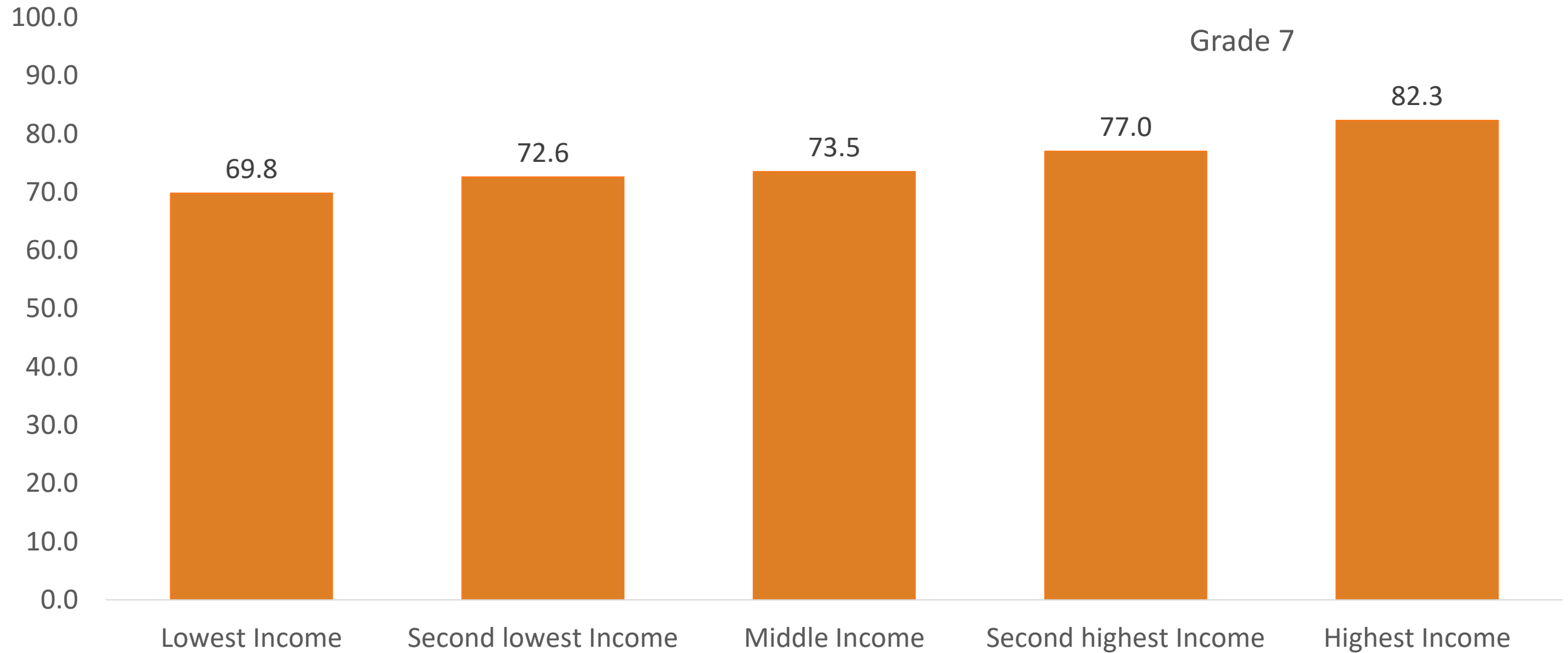


MDI Well-being Index, % *Thriving* by Census Family Income Quintiles (Data 2016-2018)





% Participation in Organized Activities by Census Family Income Quintiles (Data 2016-2018)



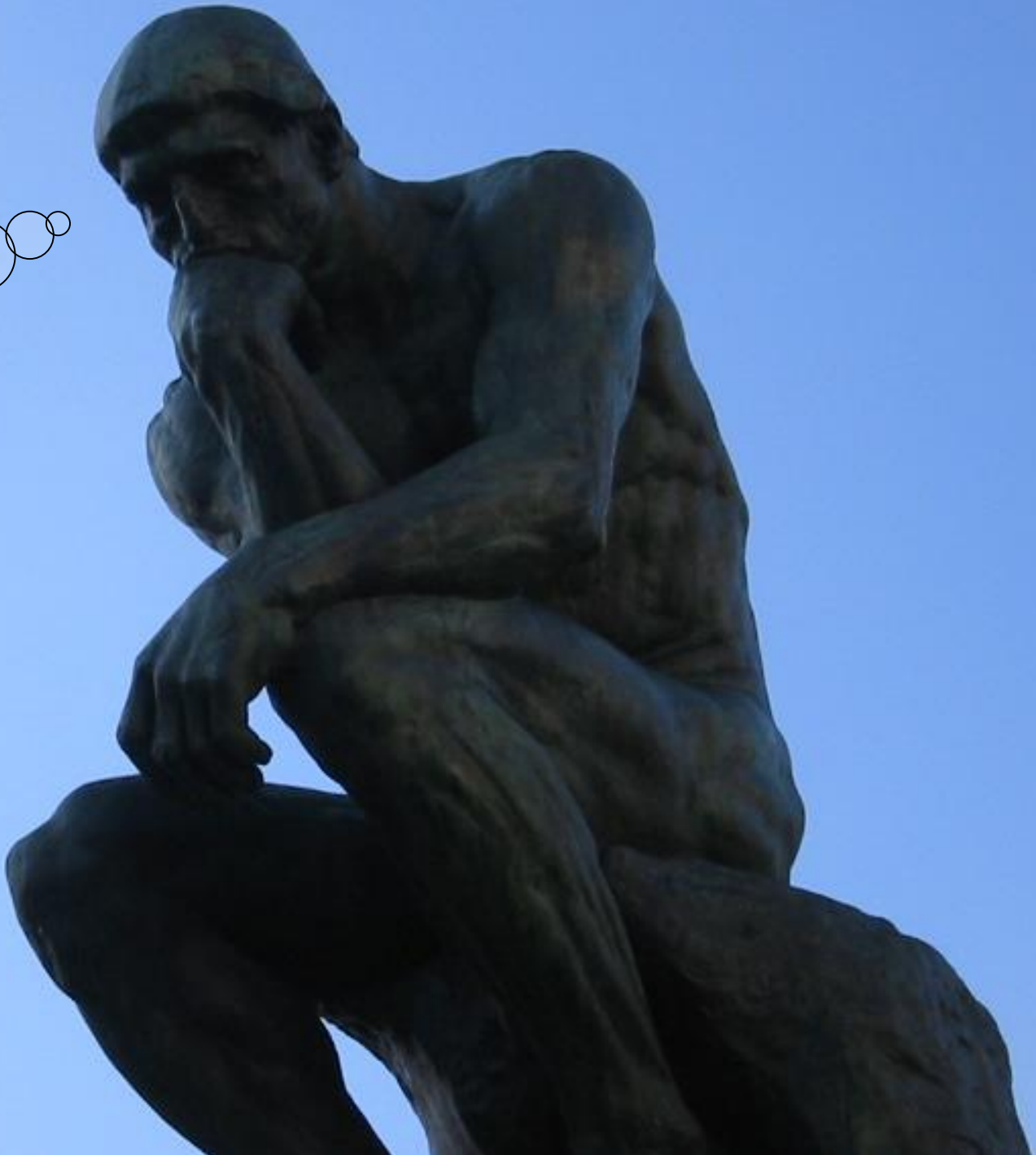
Income

in

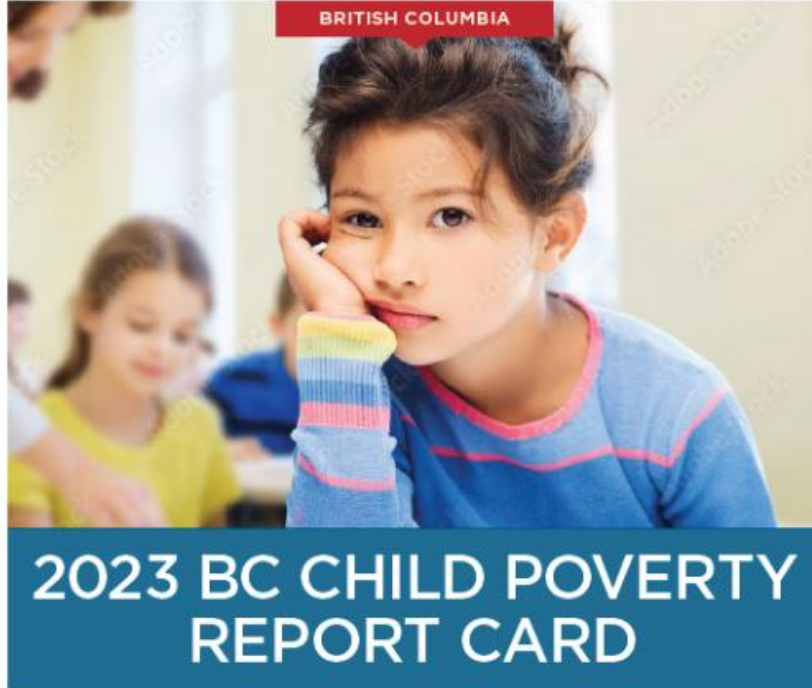
equality

childhood experiences





*What do we do,
as a society,
with this evidence
at hand?*



IN COLLABORATION WITH



27TH ANNUAL REPORT CARD ON CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO END CHILD POVERTY BY 2000

Did you know that 1 in 7 kids in British Columbia lives in poverty?

First Call is working to change that.

Check out our recently released
[2023 BC Child Poverty Report Card.](#)

WHAT ARE SOME KEY FACTS FROM 2021?

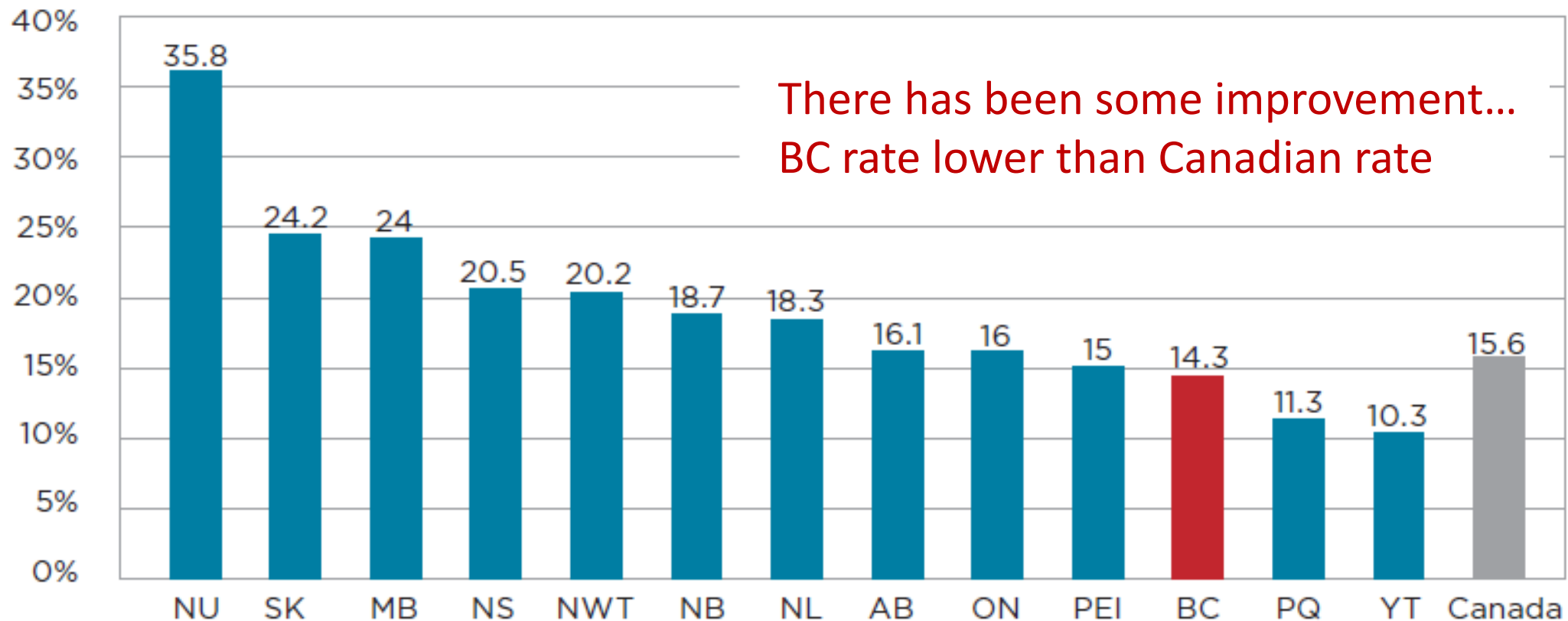
BRITISH COLUMBIA

2023 BC CHILD POVERTY REPORT CARD

- ✓ **Child poverty is on the rise again, with the withdrawal of pandemic benefits.**
- ✓ **Reducing poverty for the 126,120 poor BC children needs urgent action.**
- ✓ **The income inequality gap is widening in BC.**
- ✓ **Children in lone-parent families have one of the highest risks of poverty at 40.4%.**

One in Seven BC Children Living in Poverty

Child Poverty Rates, by Province/Territory, CFLIM After Tax, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, Table I-13, Individual Data, 2021 (2023)

One in Seven BC Children Living in Poverty

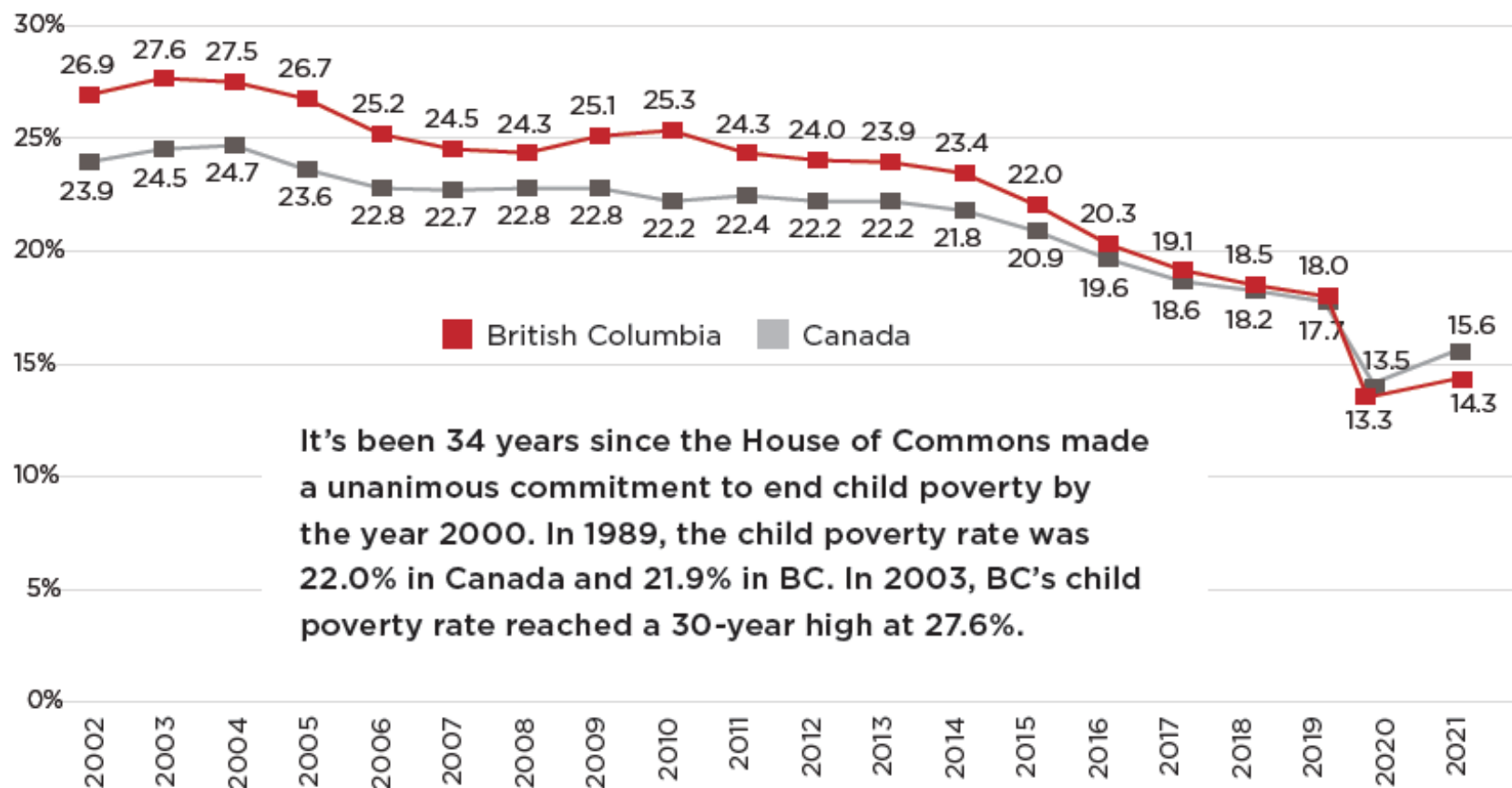
All-Ages, Child (0-17) and Young Children (0-5) Poverty Rates, BC and Canada, CFLIM After Tax, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, Table I-13, Individual Data, 2021 and custom tabulations (2023)

BC's Child Poverty Rates Over Time

Child Poverty Rates, Canada and British Columbia, CFLIM After Tax, 2002-2021

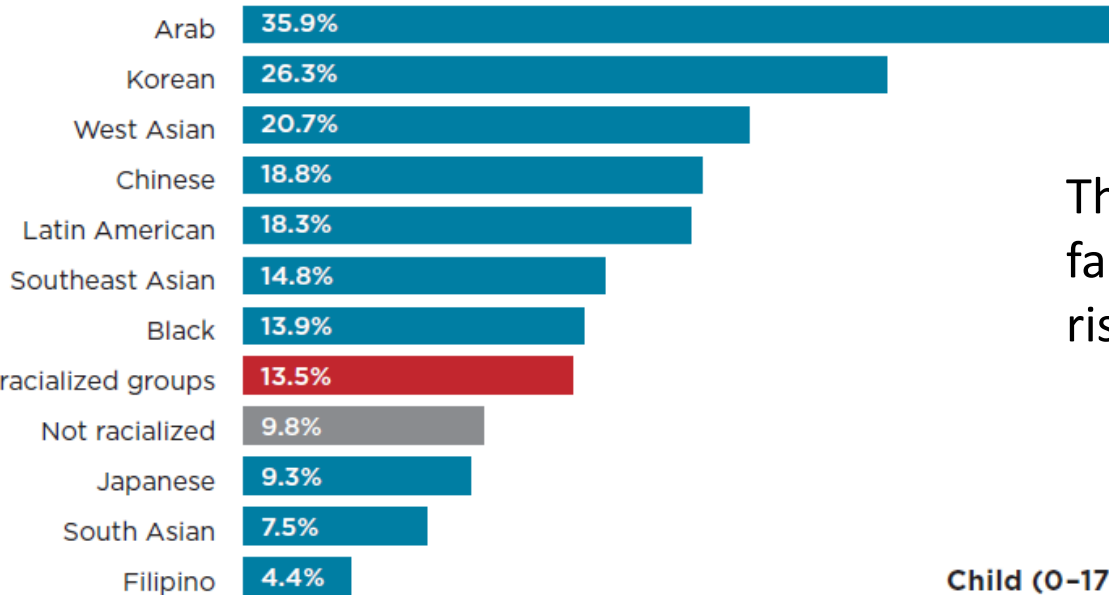


Source: Statistics Canada, Table: 11-10-0018-01 (2023)

Between 2020 and 2021, the number of BC children living in poverty increased by 9,620.

One in Seven BC Children Living in Poverty

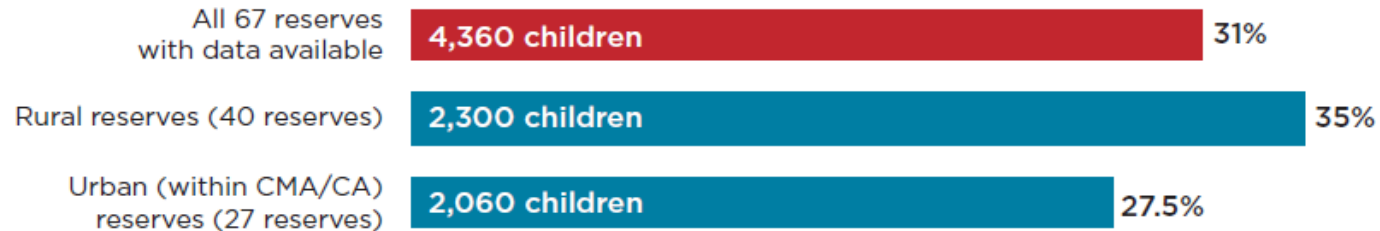
BC Child (0-17) Poverty Rates (LIM-AT), Select Racialized Groups, 2020



Source: Statistic Canada, Census of Population 2021, custom tabulations (2023)

The overall child poverty statistics hide the fact that some children in BC are at greater risk of living in poverty than others.

Child (0-17) poverty rate, 67 BC First Nations reserves, CFLIM-AT, 2021



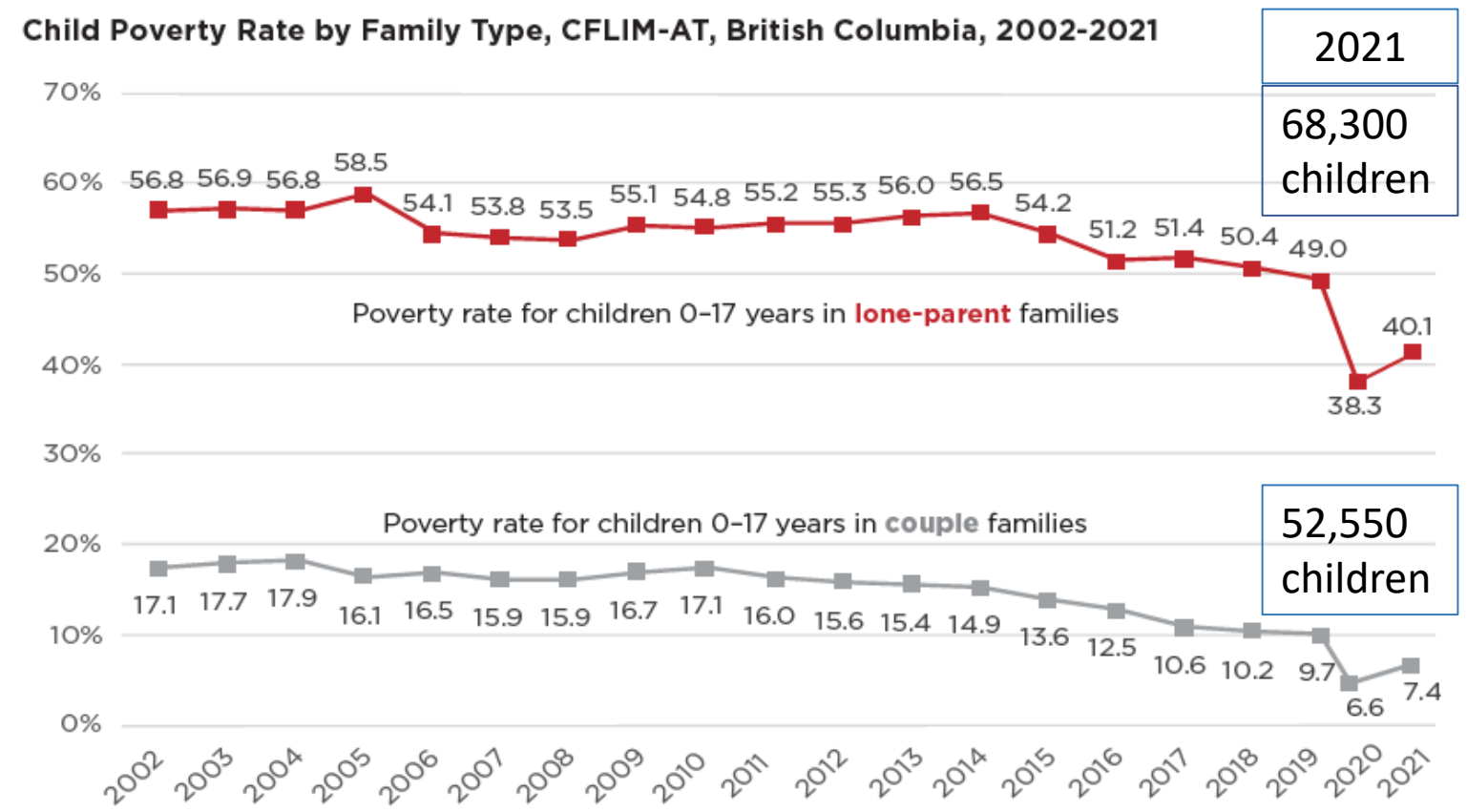
Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, Table I-13, Individual Data, 2021 (2023)

BC Child Poverty by Family Type



In 2021, 80% of lone-parent families in BC were female-led. Their median incomes at \$55,140/yr were 74% of the median incomes of male-led lone-parent families at \$72,550/yr.

Poor lone-parent families were 5 ½ times more likely to be poor than couple families with children.

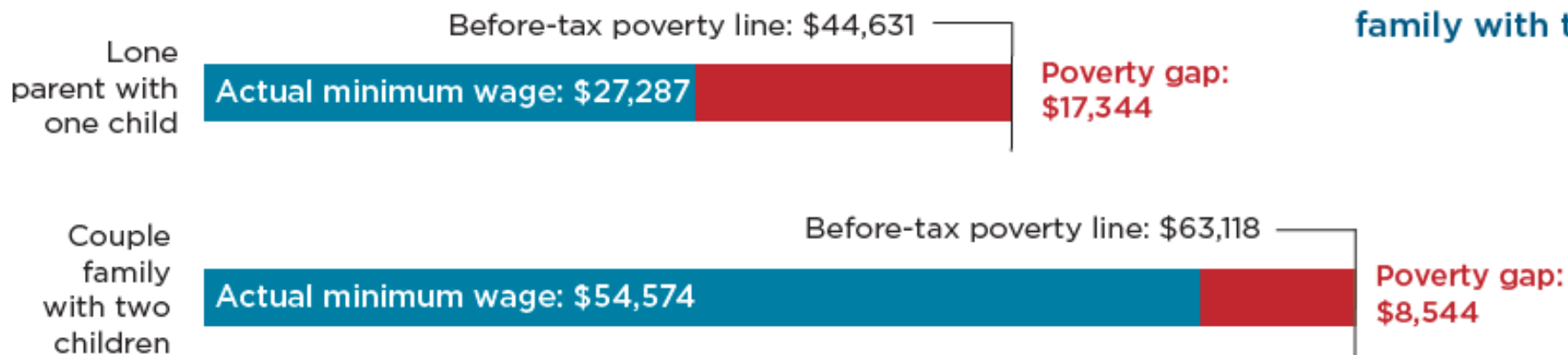


Source: Statistics Canada, Table 11-10-0018-01, 2021 (2023)

Child Poverty and Working Parents

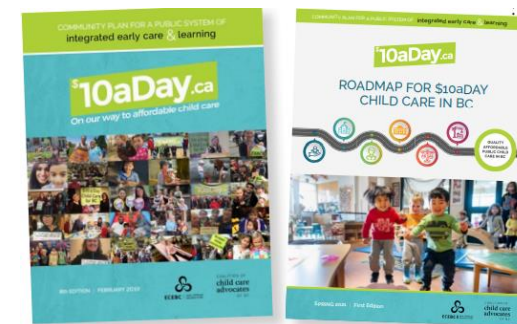
LOW WAGES AND PRECARIOUS WORK

Income Gaps for Parents Working Full-Time, Full-Year at BC's Minimum Wage in 2021, Compared to LIM Before Tax, 2021



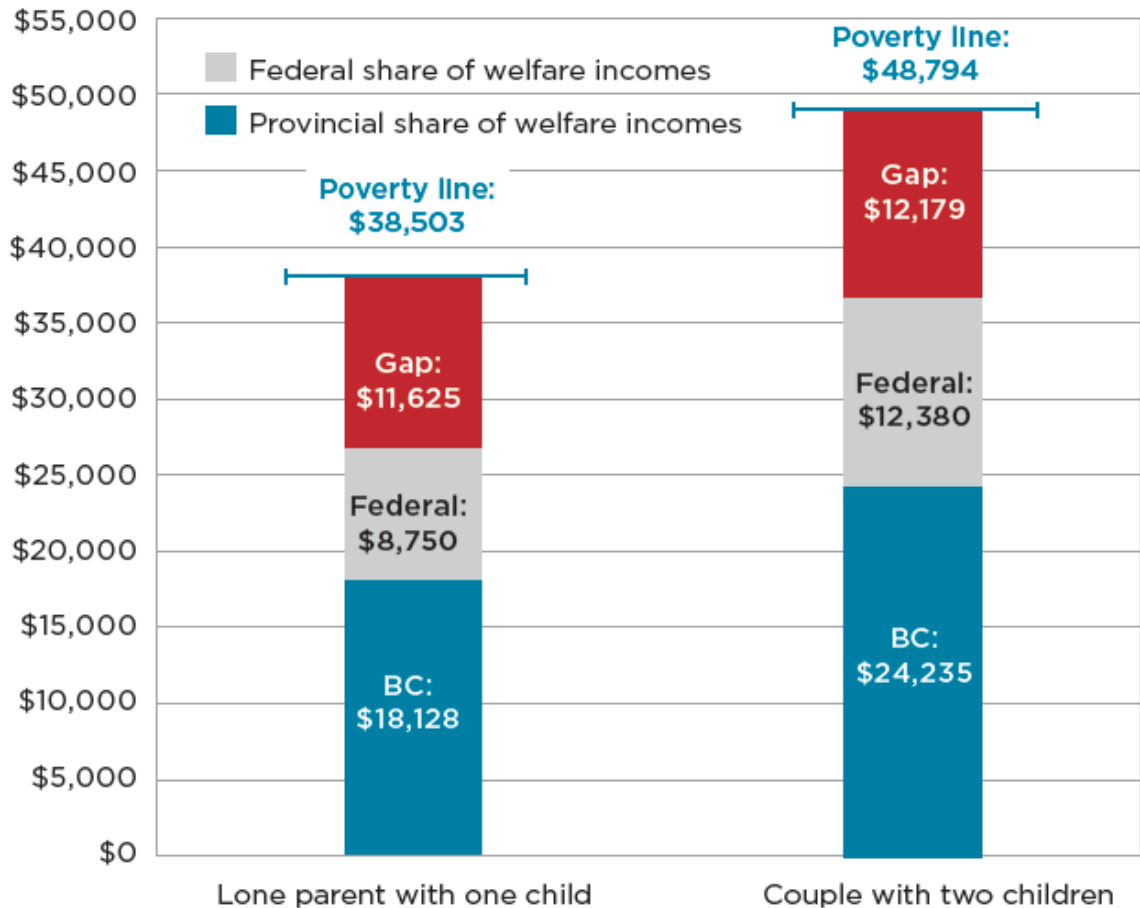
Source: Statistics Canada, Table 11-10-0232-01 Low-income measure (LIM) thresholds (2023)

“My family takes transit. By the time I take my children to school and daycare in different locations, and then bus to work, it takes me about two hours. I’m spending four hours a day commuting on transit because there are no daycare spots available close to home or work.” — Mother in a two-parent family with two young children



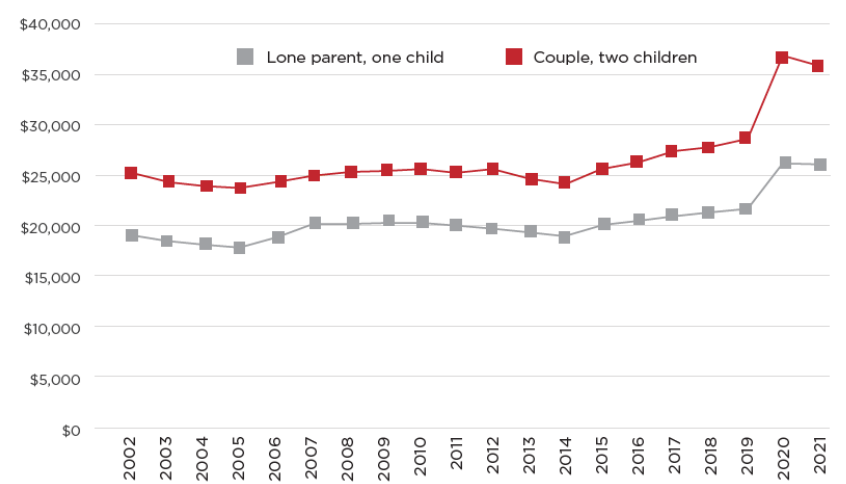
Children in Families on Welfare

Federal and Provincial Shares of Welfare Incomes and Poverty Gaps by Family Type in BC, 2021



Welfare incomes for BC families, adjusted for inflation, went down in value in 2021. This was the first time they lost value after 6 years of steady gains.

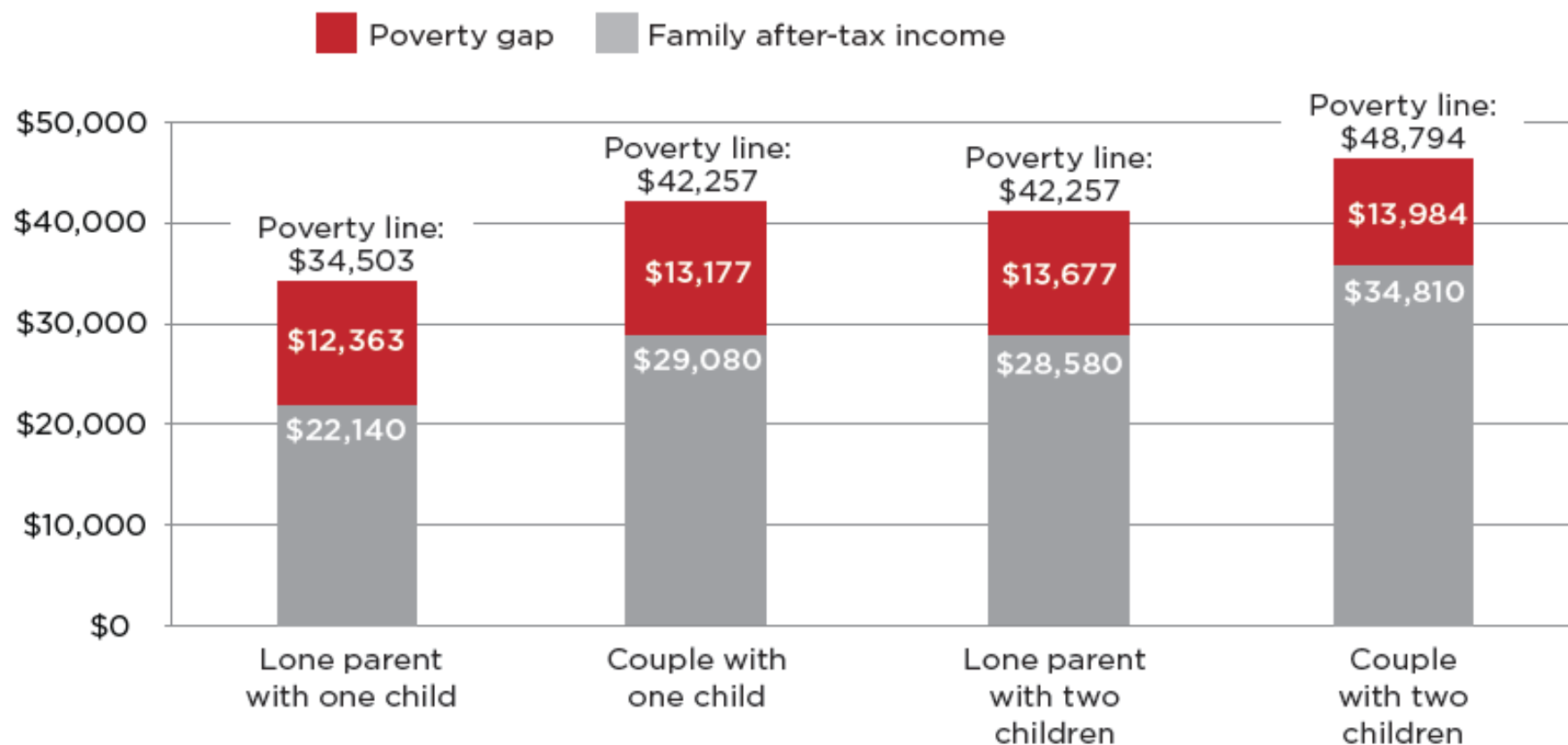
Welfare Incomes (Adjusted for Inflation, 2021 Constant Dollars), by Family Type, BC, 2002-2021



Source: Jennefer Laidley and Mohy Tabbara, *Welfare Incomes in Canada, 2021*, November 2022,

Depth of Family Poverty

Depth of Low Income for Poor Families in British Columbia, 2021

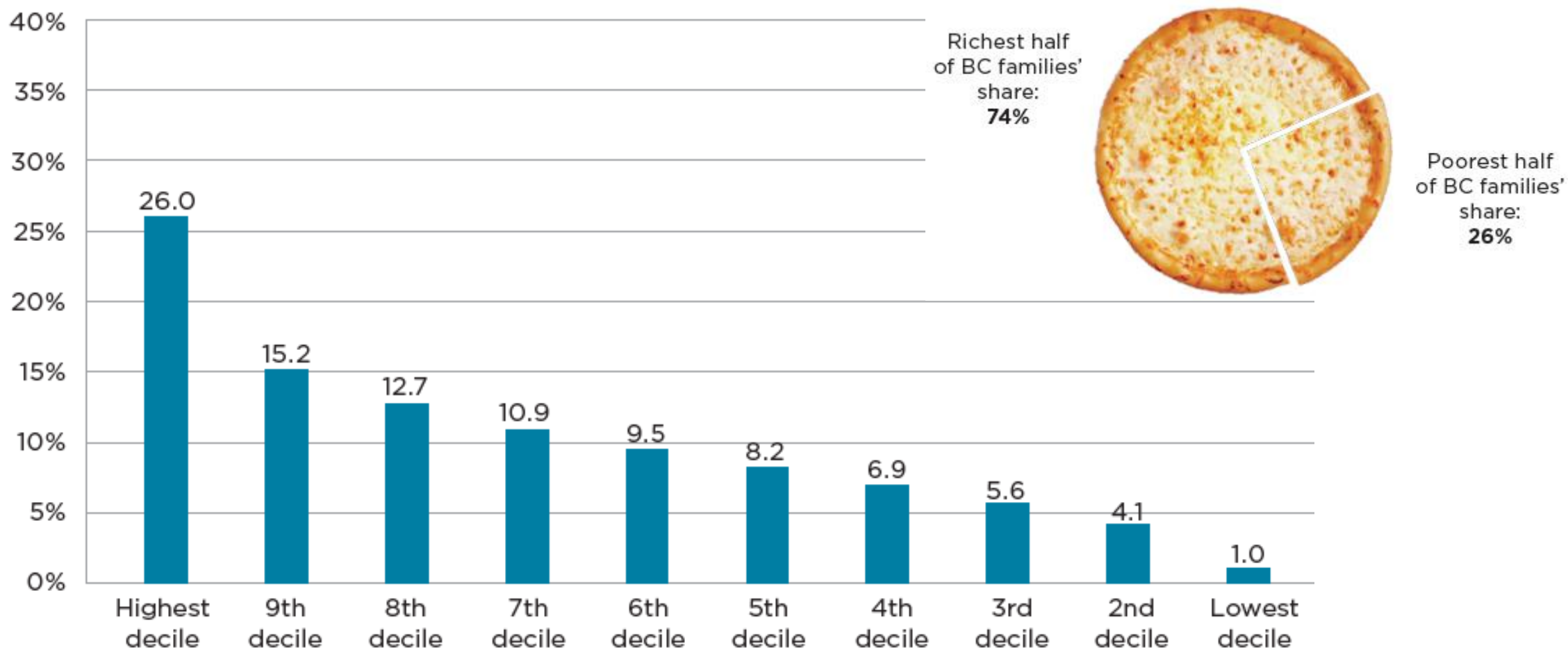


**THESE FAMILIES
WOULD HAVE HAD
TO EARN FROM
\$1,030 TO \$1,165
MORE PER
MONTH TO REACH
THE POVERTY
LINE.**

Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, Table 11-10-0020-01 and T1FF Tech Reference Guide, Final Estimates, 2021 (2023)

Growing Income Inequality

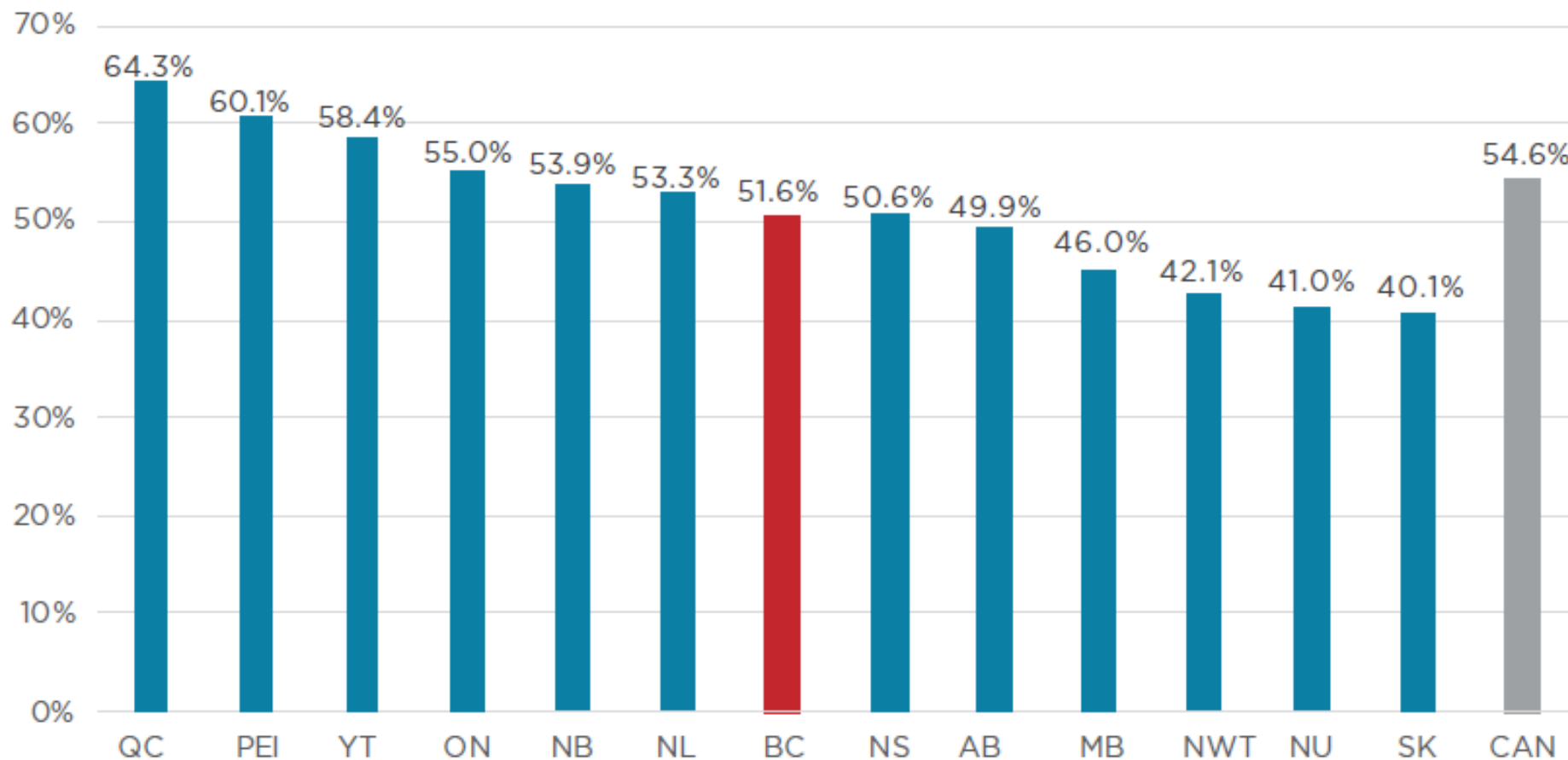
BC Average After-Tax Family Income Shares, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Custom tabulation, data from T1 Family Files 2021 (2023)

Importance of Government Help: Public Policy Matters

Child Poverty Reduction by Government Transfer Payments, 2021





134,350 BC children
were kept out of
poverty in 2021 thanks
to government help.

Source: Statistics Canada, Custom tabulation, data from T1 Family File, 2021 (2023)




Advocacy in Action

Advocacy Works!

- 2010** Living Wage Employer program starts: 350+ employers, impacting 30,000 + staff
- 2015** Elimination of the welfare clawback of child support:
 depth of poverty for 5,400+ children
- 2016** EI maternity/parental benefits fully exempt for people on IA/disability. Benefits 200+ parents/year
- 2018** BC Bill 39 Poverty Reduction Strategy Act: legislated target
 child poverty 50% within 5 years.

Advocacy Works!


- 2019** BC Family Benefit introduced: up to age 18, doubled amount, impacting all low-income families
- 2021**  support for youth transitioning out of care, aiming to ensure youth no longer age out of care and into homelessness.
- 2021** Get on Board, children 12 and under can ride Translink free of charge

Universal child care is a key poverty reduction strategy

A WHOLE LIFE

The Impact of \$10-a-Day Child Care on the Health and Socioeconomic Well-being of Low-Income Lone Mothers in BC

AUTHORED BY
Lea Caragata,
Viveca Ellis,
Zeynya S. Alemayehu




**CHILD CARE B.C.
CARING FOR KIDS,
LIFTING UP FAMILIES**

THE PATH TO UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE

\$10aDay.ca

ROADMAP FOR \$10aDAY CHILD CARE IN BC



QUALITY AFFORDABLE PUBLIC CHILDCARE IN BC



MAKING ENDS MEET

LOW WAGE WORK, POVERTY AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN VANCOUVER

Recommendations: What Needs to Happen



25 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

TAX FAIRNESS AND INCOME SUPPORT

Minimum wages | Living wages | Welfare rates | Child benefits | EI reform | Tax reform

TARGETED INITIATIVES FOR GROUPS OVER-REPRESENTED IN POVERTY DATA

Indigenous communities | Newcomers | Youth from care | Kinship caregivers | Kids w/Disabilities

LOWER BARRIERS AND IMPROVE LIVES THROUGH UNIVERSAL PROGRAMS

Child care | Public health | Affordable housing | Public schools | School Meals | Post-Secondary
Public transit | Digital access | Expanded Health Care Coverage

Where is your influence for issues that matter to you?

Election periods = opportunities to:

- Raise public awareness
- Educate candidates
- Propose policy changes
- Seek commitments from parties and candidates
- Use election toolkits/materials produced by organizations
- Use social media

Roles open to advocacy anytime:

- Citizen/resident/constituent
- Employee
- Union or professional association member
- Faith group member
- Political party member
- Family member and friend
- Etc.

Q & A



Read the full BC Child Poverty Report Card, support our calls to action, and subscribe to the The Child & Youth Advocate newsletter at: www.firstcallbc.org

Attend a First Call monthly Network meeting: <https://firstcallbc.org/get-involved/monthly-network-meetings/> or Early Childhood Development Roundtable meeting: <https://firstcallbc.org/get-involved/ecd-roundtable-meetings/>

Follow us on Twitter **@FirstCallBC**

Email us at info@firstcallbc.org

Thank you!



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