

UNICEF

Office of Research - Innocenti

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*Innocenti Report Card 13*  
**Inequality in Child Well-Being  
in Rich Countries**

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# Key questions

## **Across countries and over time:**

- How far behind are children allowed to fall in key dimensions of their well-being?
- Who are the children most at risk of falling behind?
- How much does family background matter?

# Dimensions, indicators and data

Coverage: 41 countries in the EU and/or OECD

- **Income**

- Relative distance between the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile and the median
- *Data*: household income and living conditions surveys 2008-2013

- **Education**

- Distance between the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile and the median (relative disadvantage)
- Supplemented by: % below Level 2 in all three subjects (absolute disadvantage)
- *Data*: PISA 2002-2012

# Dimensions, indicators and data

- **Health symptoms**

- headache; stomach ache; backache; feeling low; irritability or bad temper; feeling nervous; difficulties in getting to sleep; and feeling dizzy
  - “about every day“, “more than once a week“, “about every week“, “about every month“, “rarely or never“
  - Responses are summed up to produce a composite scale ranging from 0 to 32. The score of zero corresponds to frequent occurrence of all eight health complaints and 32 refers to no health complaints

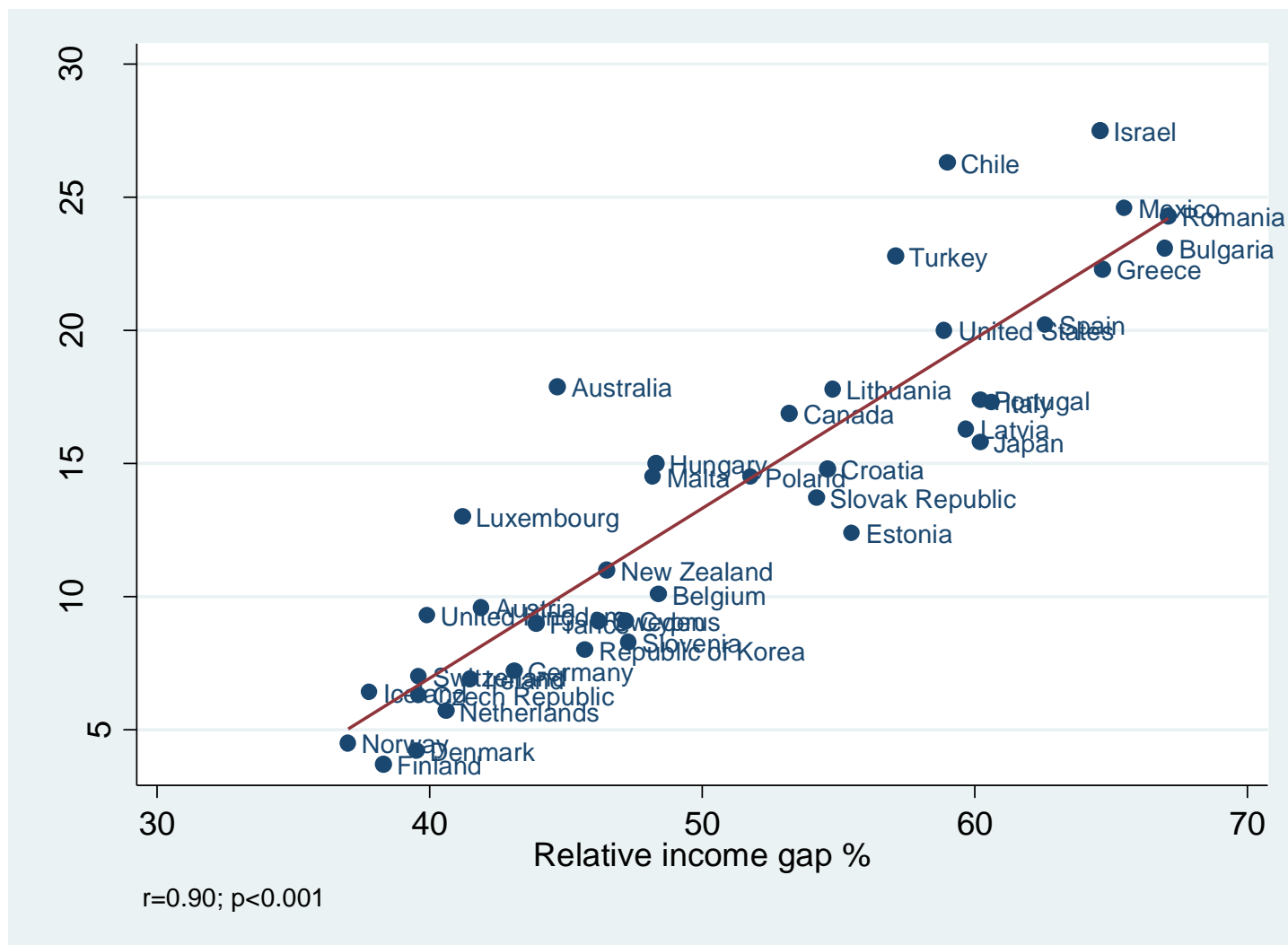
- **Life satisfaction**

- Cantril Ladder (0-10)
- Relative distance between the mean of the lower half of the distribution and the median
- *Data*: Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Survey 2002-2014

# Income LT: key findings

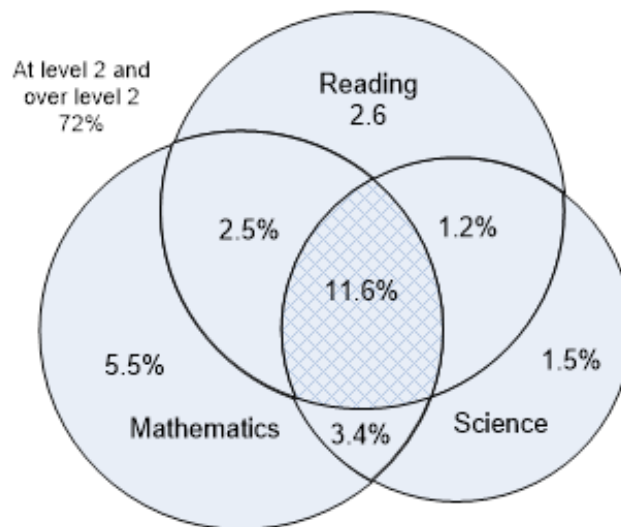
- In 19 of 41 countries the relative income gap exceeds 50%:
  - The child at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile has less than half the disposable household income of the child at the median
- Scandinavian countries (except Sweden) top the league table with lowest levels of bottom-end income inequality of ~40%
- Most Southern European countries have high relative income gaps:
  - Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain rank in the bottom-third of the LT
- Chile, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and the US are all in the bottom third of the league table
  - Australia, Korea, New Zealand are in the top half
  - Canada is in the middle third but lower half

# Bottom-end income inequality and child poverty



# Education LT: key findings

- There is no necessary trade-off between low levels of *relative* disadvantage and high *absolute* standards of educational achievement
- BUT: some countries have low bottom-end inequality and a lot of children falling below Level 2 in all three subjects and others have high inequality and few children falling below this absolute standard



**Low** achievement gap

**High** share of children below proficiency level 2 in all three subjects

**Low** achievement gap and

**Low** share of children below proficiency level 2 in all three subjects

Chile, Romania, Greece, Hungary, USA, Lithuania, Croatia	<b>Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Poland,</b>  Korea, Finland, Denmark, Canada,
<b>Bulgaria, Israel, the Slovak Republic, Sweden</b>  France, Iceland, Portugal	Japan, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherland, Australia, Austria, New Zealand, Belgium, Great Britain, Norway

**High** achievement gap

**High** share of children below proficiency level 2 in all three subjects

**High** achievement gap and

**Low** share of children below proficiency level 2 in all three subjects

## Relative and absolute educational disadvantage

*Note:* Countries in bold are statistically different from the OECD unweighted average. *Source:* PISA 2012



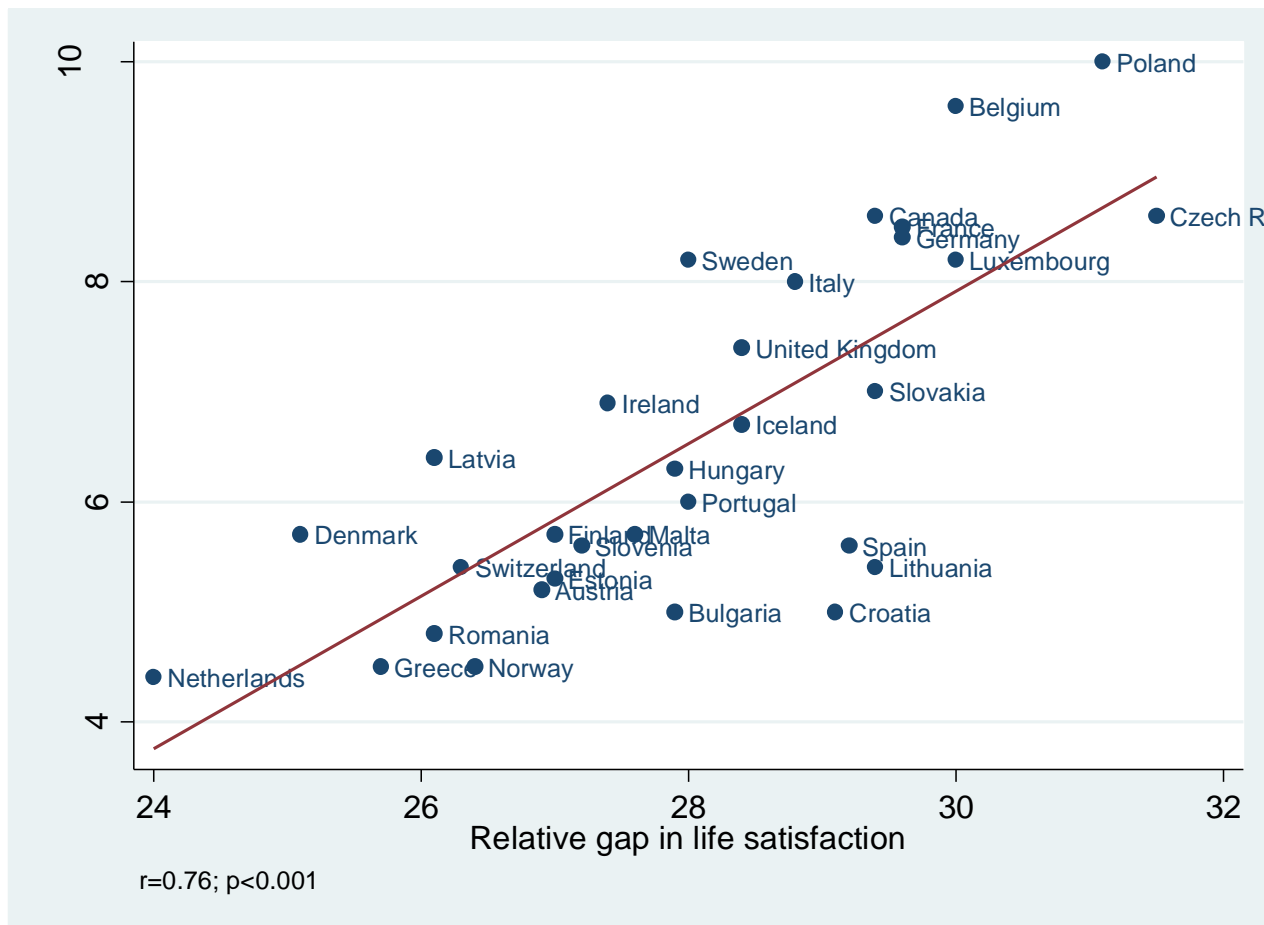
# Health LT: key findings

- Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway and Switzerland are at the top of the health LT with the lowest levels of bottom-end inequality
- Israel, Turkey, Poland and Romania are at the bottom of the LT
- Average health outcomes are poorer in countries with greater bottom-end inequality in health

# Life Satisfaction: key findings

- Although there is little variation across countries in median life satisfaction (8 out of 10 except in CZ and RO), the least happy children tend to fall far behind their peers
- Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands have the lowest levels of bottom-end inequality in life satisfaction (25%), while the Czech Republic, Poland and Turkey show the largest gaps (31%-36%)

# Bottom-end inequality and absolute levels of life satisfaction



# Trends over time

- **Income**

- Increasing trend in the majority of the countries (2008-2013), but even where inequality decreased, it often happened because median incomes fell faster than the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile

- **Education**

- Relative gaps decreased in many countries (2006-2012), but sometimes due to falling median scores

- **Health**

- Inequality in health symptoms increased in the majority of the countries between 2002 and 2014

- **Life satisfaction**

- Mixed trend: stable in half the countries; increased in as many as where it decreased (between 2002 and 2014)

# Demographics and SES

- **Age and sex**
  - Girls are more likely to fall behind in health and life satisfaction, especially at age 15
  - Boys are more likely to fall behind in education
- **Socio-economic status – persistent inequalities**
  - Children from lower SES household most likely to fall behind in education (especially by father's occupation; books at home)
  - Children from lower affluence families are more likely to fall behind in health (but not in all countries), life satisfaction and healthy behaviors (physical activity; fruit and veg consumption)

Thanks!

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