

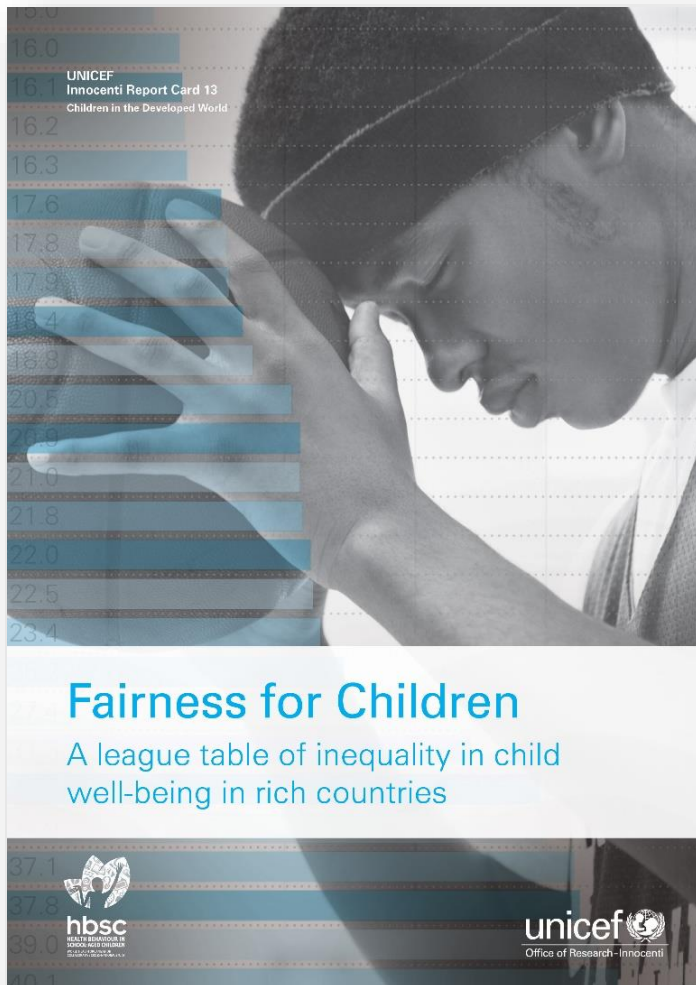
**UNICEF REPORT CARD 13**  
**Fairness for Children:**  
**Inequality in child well-being**  
**within wealthy nations**

**Lisa Wolff**

**Atkinson Summer Institute**  
**2 June 2017**

**[www.unicef.ca/irc13](http://www.unicef.ca/irc13)**


# The UNICEF Index of Child Inequality



- How unequal are Canada's children and youth?
- How does inequality affect their well-being?
- What could narrow the gaps and raise child well-being?

# UNICEF Index of Child Well-being

## Report Card 11

Rank	Country
1	Netherlands
2	Norway
3	Iceland
4	Finland
5	Sweden
6	Germany
7	Luxembourg
8	Switzerland
9	Belgium
10	Ireland
11	Denmark
12	Slovenia
13	France
14	Czech Republic
15	Portugal
16	United Kingdom
17	Canada 
18	Austria
19	Spain
20	Hungary
21	Poland
22	Italy
23	Estonia
23	Slovakia
25	Greece
26	United States
27	Lithuania
28	Latvia
29	Romania

**The following countries do not appear in the Composite Index because data is not available:**

Republic of Korea, Chile, New Zealand, Japan, Cyprus, Mexico

no child  
too far.™

# UNICEF Index of Child Inequality

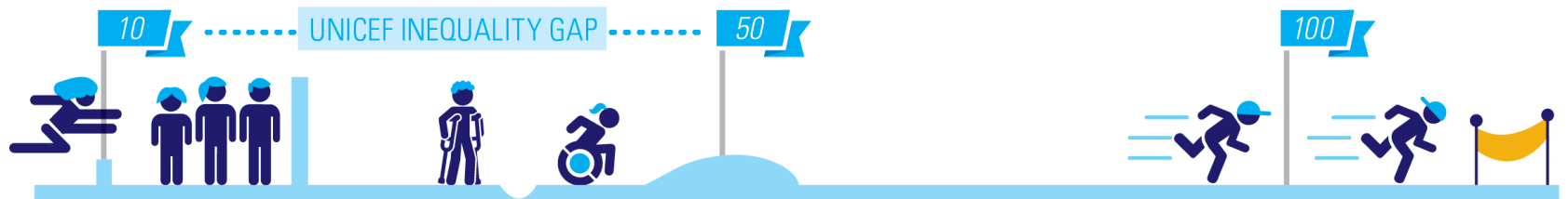
## Report Card 13

Rank	Country
1	Denmark
2	Finland
2	Norway
2	Switzerland
5	Austria
6	Netherlands
7	Ireland
8	Estonia
9	Slovenia
10	Latvia
11	Czech Republic
12	Croatia
13	Australia
14	Germany
14	Greece
14	Hungary
14	United Kingdom
18	United States
19	Portugal
20	Iceland
21	Romania
22	Spain
23	Sweden
24	Malta
25	Lithuania
26	Canada 
27	Poland
28	France
29	Belgium
29	Luxembourg
31	Slovakia
32	Italy
33	Bulgaria
34	Turkey
35	Israel

# Measuring the gaps

## Bottom-end inequality

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# Inequality across dimensions

**League Table 5** Average rank across all dimensions of inequality

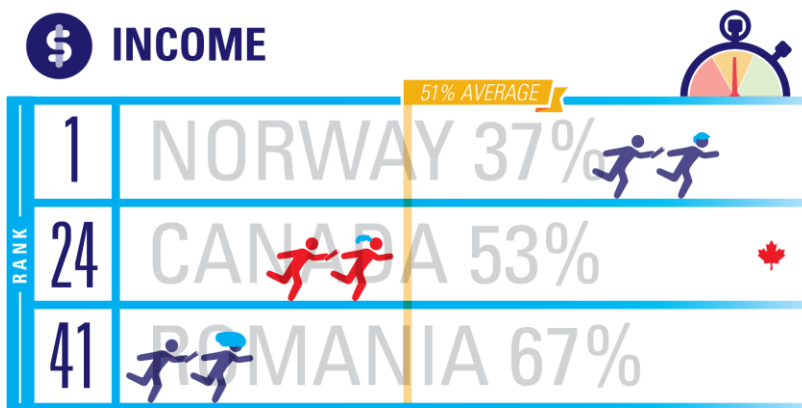
Rank	Country	Income	Education	Health	Life satisfaction
1	Denmark	4	8	5	3
2=	Finland	3	16	6	11
2=	Norway	1	23	4	8
2=	Switzerland	6	20	3	7
5	Austria	11	21	1	9
6	Netherlands	8	30	8	1
7	Ireland	10	9	20	13
8	Estonia	28	3	13	10
9	Slovenia	19	11	16	12
10	Latvia	32	4	17	6
11	Czech Republic	5	13	9	34
12	Croatia	26	5	12	23
13	Australia	14	24	27	2
14=	Germany	12	28	2	29
14=	Greece	38	18	11	4
14=	Hungary	21	17	18	15
14=	United Kingdom	7	25	19	20
18	United States	30	10	14	21
19	Portugal	33	19	7	18
20	Iceland	2	26	31	19
21	Romania	41	2	32	5
22	Spain	36	12	10	24
23	Sweden	16	29	22	17
24	Malta	20		30	14
25	Lithuania	27	7	25	27
26	Canada	24	14	24	25
27	Poland	23	6	33	33
28	France	13	35	23	28
29=	Belgium	22	36	15	30
29=	Luxembourg	9	33	29	32
31	Slovakia	25	34	21	26
32	Italy	35	22	28	22
33	Bulgaria	40	32	26	16
34	Turkey	29		34	35
35	Israel	37	37	35	31
-	Republic of Korea	15	15		
-	Chile	31	1		
-	New Zealand	17	31		
-	Japan	34	27		
-	Cyprus	18			
-	Mexico	39			



n.a  
  top third  
  middle third  
  bottom third  
  two or more indicators missing

# Income inequality

**RANK**  
**24/41**



In Canada, the poorest children have family incomes 53 per cent lower than the average child.

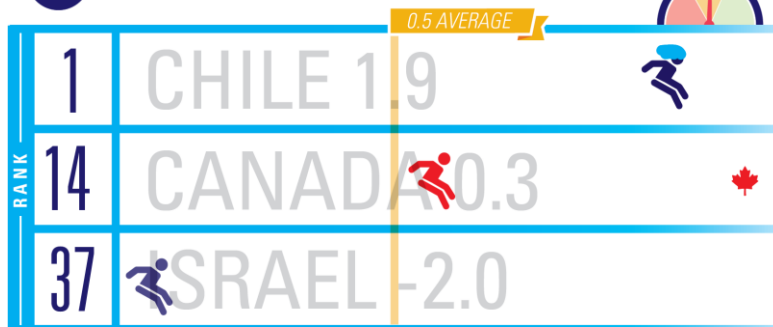
**League Table 1** Inequality in income

Rank	Country	Relative income gap	Child poverty rate (50% of the median)
1	Norway	37.00	4.5
2	Iceland	37.76	6.4
3	Finland	38.34	3.7
4	Denmark	39.54	4.8
5	Czech Republic	39.62	6.3
6	Switzerland	39.64	7
7	United Kingdom	39.94	9.3
8	Netherlands	40.64	5.7
9	Luxembourg	41.21	13
10	Ireland	41.49	6.9
11	Austria	41.87	9.6
12	Germany	43.11	7.2
13	France	43.95	9
14	Australia	44.75	9.3
15	Republic of Korea	45.74	8
16	Sweden	46.23	9.1
17	New Zealand	46.52	11
18	Cyprus	47.19	9.1
19	Slovenia	47.29	8.3
20	Malta	48.21	14.5
21	Hungary	48.34	15
22	Belgium	48.41	10.1
23	Poland	51.76	14.5
24	Canada	53.19	16.9
25	Slovakia	54.21	13.7
26	Croatia	54.59	14.8
27	Lithuania	54.81	17.8
28	Estonia	55.55	12.4
29	Turkey	57.07	22.8
30	United States	58.85	20
31	Chile	59.03	26.3
32	Latvia	59.66	16.3
33	Portugal	60.17	17.4
34	Japan	60.21	15.8
35	Italy	60.64	17.7
36	Spain	62.62	20.2
37	Israel	64.58	27.5
38	Greece	64.69	22.3
39	Mexico	65.00	24.6
40	Bulgaria	67.01	23.1
41	Romania	67.08	24.3

# Education inequality

**RANK**  
**14/37**

## EDUCATION



In Canada, the children at the bottom have an educational achievement gap 0.3 points lower than the average child.

League Table 2 Inequality in education

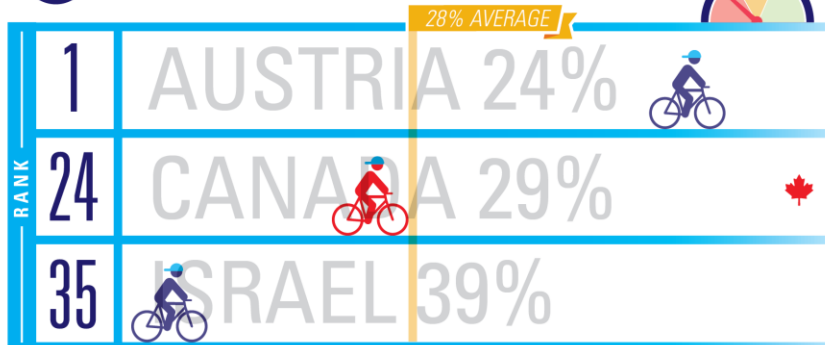
Rank	Country	Achievement gap	Share of children below proficiency level 2 in all three subjects
1	Chile	1.92	24.6
2	Romania	1.77	24.0
3	Estonia	1.59	3.2
4	Latvia	1.19	8.3
5	Croatia	0.88	11.7
6	Poland	0.79	5.7
7	Lithuania	0.67	12.1
8	Denmark	0.66	9.3
9	Ireland	0.62	6.8
10	United States	0.54	12.2
11	Slovenia	0.46	9.9
12	Spain	0.36	10.4
13	Czech Republic	0.30	8.9
14	Canada	0.28	6.2
15	Republic of Korea	0.22	4.4
16	Finland	0.18	5.3
17	Hungary	0.15	13.1
18	Greece	0.08	15.7
19	Portugal	-0.10	12.6
20	Switzerland	-0.12	7.5
21	Austria	-0.17	10.7
22	Italy	-0.26	11.9
23	Norway	-0.28	11.0
24	Australia	-0.29	9.1
25	United Kingdom	-0.40	11.2
26	Iceland	-0.46	13.6
27	Japan	-0.48	5.5
28	Germany	-0.56	8.8
29	Sweden	-0.61	15.0
30	Netherlands	-0.70	8.6
31	New Zealand	-0.94	11.1
32	Bulgaria	-0.97	28.6
33	Luxembourg	-0.98	14.4
34	Slovakia	-1.03	18.8
35	France	-1.36	12.7
36	Belgium	-1.39	11.5
37	Israel	-1.96	18.5
	Mexico	2.19	31.0
	Turkey	1.76	15.6



# Health inequality

**RANK**  
**24/37**

 **HEALTH**



In Canada, the health score for children at the bottom of the distribution is 29 per cent lower than children at the middle.

League Table 3 Inequality in health

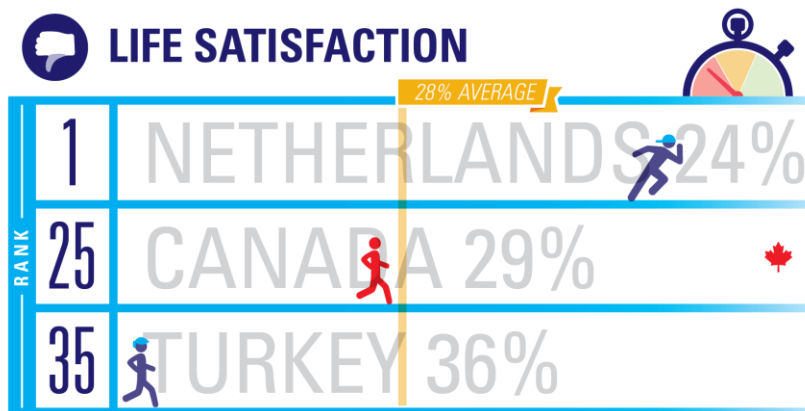
Rank	Country	Relative health gap	One or more health complaints every day
1	Austria	23.64	17.7
2	Germany	24.76	19.6
3	Switzerland	24.95	16.3
4	Norway	25.15	14.9
5	Denmark	25.50	17.6
6	Finland	25.89	15.0
7	Portugal	26.39	17.7
8	Netherlands	26.74	19.9
9	Czech Republic	26.84	25.3
10	Spain	27.31	23.9
11	Greece	27.37	27.9
12	Croatia	27.59	25.7
13	Estonia	27.65	23.8
14	United States	27.98	28.2
15	Belgium	28.14	23.8
16	Slovenia	28.29	18.7
17	Latvia	28.61	23.3
18	Hungary	28.79	22.2
19	United Kingdom	28.87	21.4
20	Ireland	28.90	21.0
21	Slovakia	28.96	23.8
22	Sweden	29.08	19.1
23	France	29.18	30.7
24	Canada	29.27	22.6
25	Lithuania	29.31	23.0
26	Bulgaria	29.39	30.6
27	Australia	29.86	21.8
28	Italy	30.11	30.5
29	Luxembourg	30.27	24.1
30	Malta	30.56	30.7
31	Iceland	31.08	22.6
32	Romania	33.95	31.2
33	Poland	34.05	27.4
34	Turkey	34.54	53.3
35	Israel	38.88	29.7

# Inequality in life satisfaction: children's sense of well-being

**RANK**  
**25/35**



## LIFE SATISFACTION



In Canada, the life satisfaction rating of children at the bottom is 29 per cent lower than the rating of children in the middle.

League Table 4 Inequality in life satisfaction

Rank	Country	Relative life satisfaction gap	Life satisfaction at 4 or lower out of 10
1	Netherlands	24.03	4.4
2	Australia	24.34	4.5
3	Denmark	25.12	5.7
4	Greece	25.72	4.5
5	Romania	26.06	4.8
6	Latvia	26.09	6.4
7	Switzerland	26.32	5.4
8	Norway	26.35	4.5
9	Austria	26.90	5.2
10	Estonia	26.95	5.3
11	Finland	27.01	5.7
12	Slovenia	27.21	5.6
13	Ireland	27.38	6.9
14	Malta	27.61	5.7
15	Hungary	27.86	6.3
16	Bulgaria	27.90	5.0
17	Sweden	27.98	8.2
18	Portugal	28.03	6.0
19	Iceland	28.38	6.7
20	United Kingdom	28.42	7.4
21	United States	28.67	7.3
22	Italy	28.80	8.0
23	Croatia	29.13	5.0
24	Spain	29.23	5.6
25	Canada	29.37	8.6
26	Slovakia	29.41	7.0
27	Lithuania	29.44	5.4
28	France	29.56	8.5
29	Germany	29.58	8.4
30	Belgium	29.96	9.6
31	Israel	30.01	7.7
32	Luxembourg	30.04	8.2
33	Poland	31.11	10.0
34	Czech Republic	31.50	8.6
35	Turkey	35.95	15.3

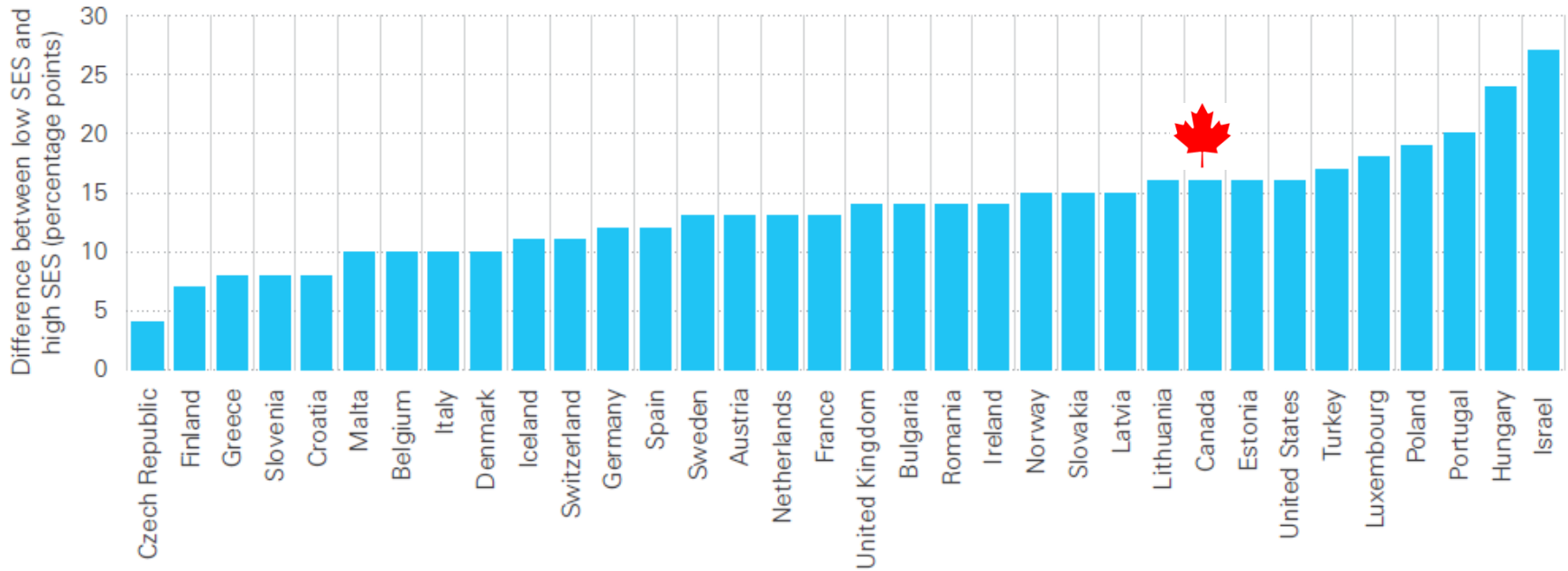


# How much of an influence does poverty have?

# Life satisfaction gradient

**RANK**  
**26/34**

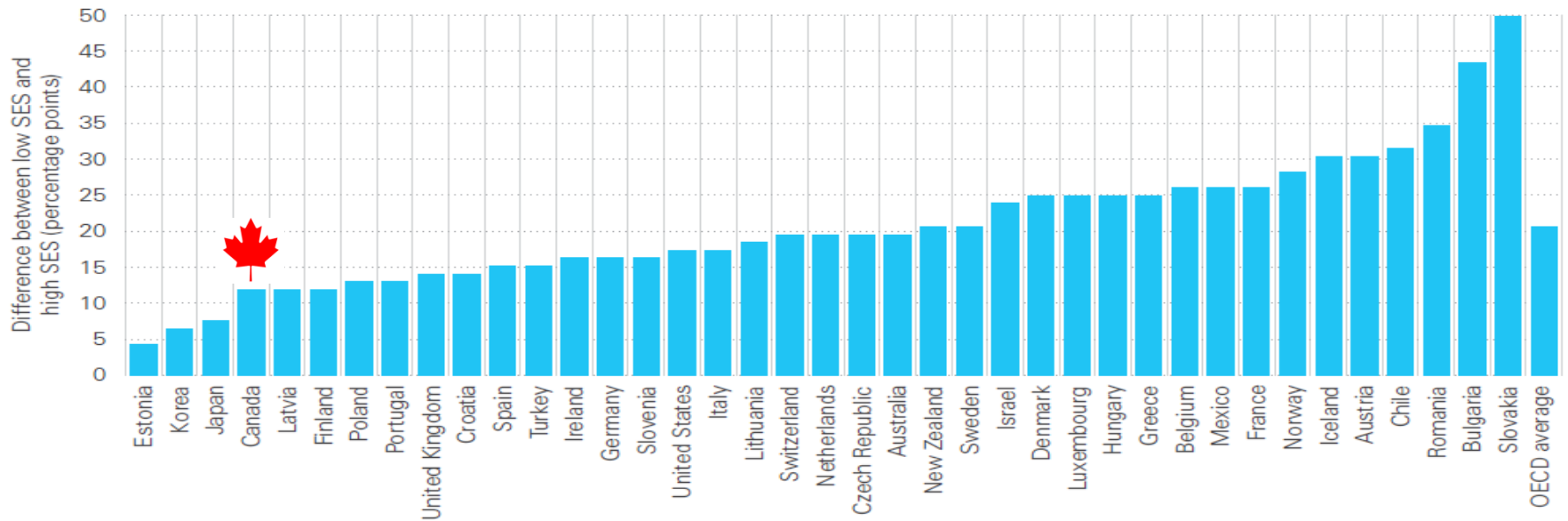
Figure 24 Socio-economic status and life satisfaction



# Educational achievement gradient

**RANK**  
**4/39**

**Figure 27** Socio-economic status and educational achievement



# Boys and girls are differently unequal

unicef   
canada

# Boys have greater educational disadvantage

RANK  
9/39



15-year-old boys  
**fare worse** than girls in  
maths, reading and science



-2 POINTS



# Girls are more likely to fall behind in health

**RANK**  
**28/34**



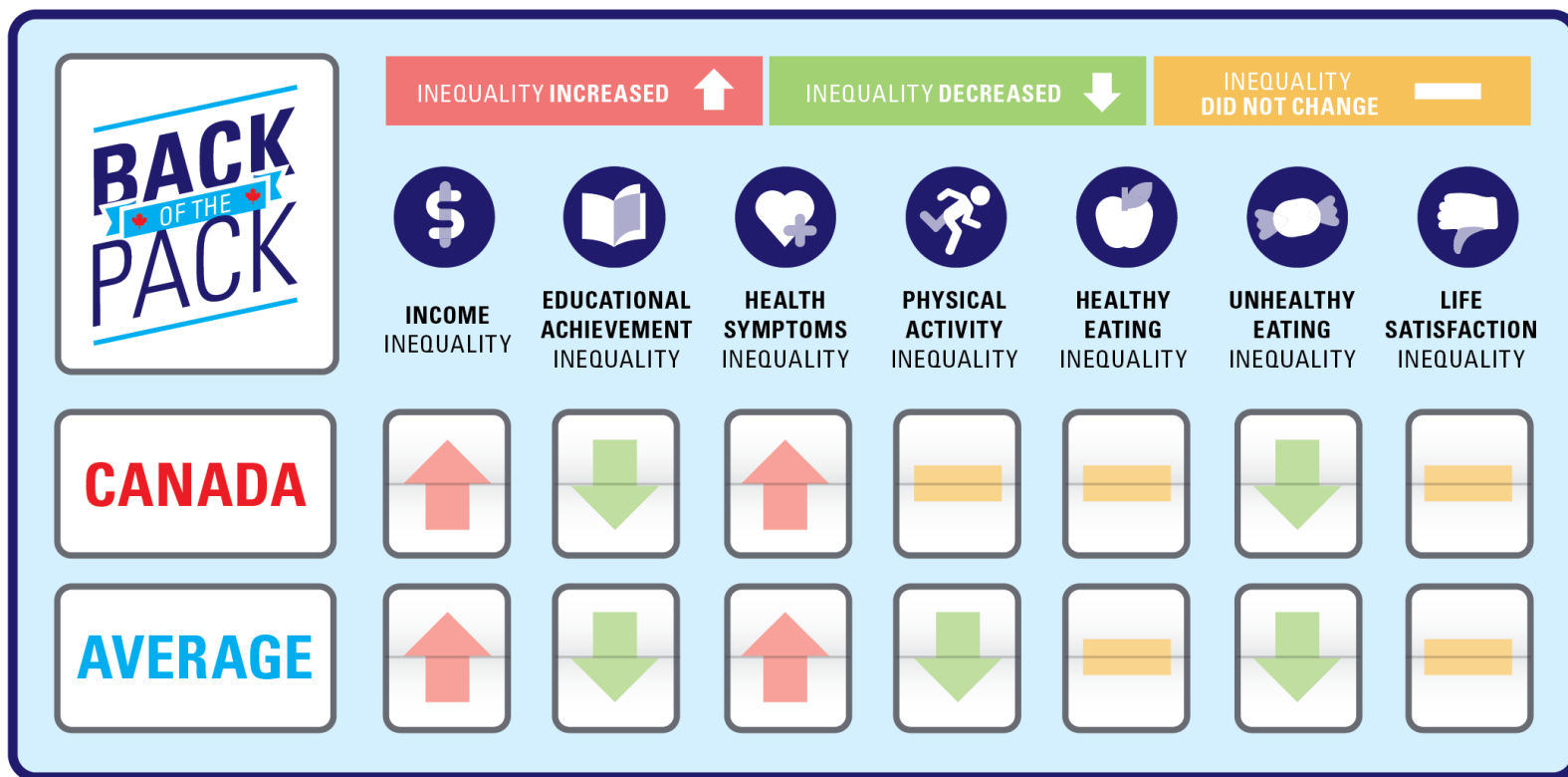
Girls are far more likely to **fall behind** in health and the gap has been increasing



-14 POINTS



# Progress is slow and mixed



# Wider gaps/lower overall child well-being

Figure 30 Bottom-end inequality and child well-being outcomes

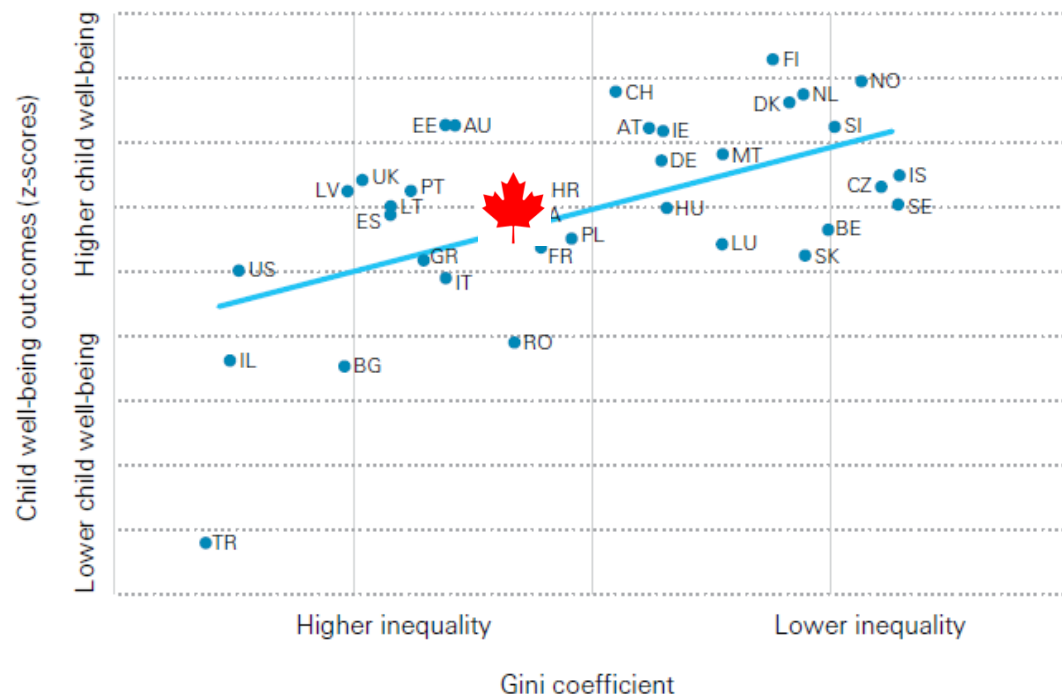


R-squared=0.80

Countries with wider “bottom-end” inequality in child well-being also tend to have lower levels of *overall* child well-being.

# Wider income inequality/lower child well-being

Figure 31 Income inequality and child well-being outcomes



Countries with greater overall income equality tend to have smaller gaps in child well-being and rank higher in *overall* child well-being.

# Competitive childhoods



# Narrowing the gaps



## Lines Ros Asquith



From *The Guardian*, UK edition 2007



# Ways to get unstuck



1. Address broad income/social inequality, top to bottom
  - Improve the incomes of families with children with progressive and accessible child-focused benefits
  - Invest in children's services including child development – early and progressively
  - Limit broad income inequality
2. Address inequalities in child well-being in all policies and services
  - Measure the gaps as well as averages (e.g., in targets, surveillance, delivery)
  - Seek progressive universalism – the bottom isn't always the income-poor