

# Poverty and Child Learning

Health Schools  
Coalition 2018



# Three stories from the UK.

# 1 Mind The Gap



# Change the lens?



- 300 injuries
- Solutions available
- Cost benefit analysis
- Bigger societal issues
  - cost not values
  - austerity and market model so subsidy decreasing
  - accidents may increase

# Poverty essentials

# Definitions: Absolute poverty

- Absolute poverty, extreme poverty, abject poverty:
  - a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services
- World bank puts absolute poverty level as living on \$1.90 a day

# Definitions: Relative poverty

- Poverty as socially defined / depends on context.
- Measured as % of the population with income at a specified proportion less than median income.
- Used by most high income countries and the OECD.
- May better reflect the cost of social inclusion and equality of opportunity in a specific time and space

# Definitions: Canada and Ontario

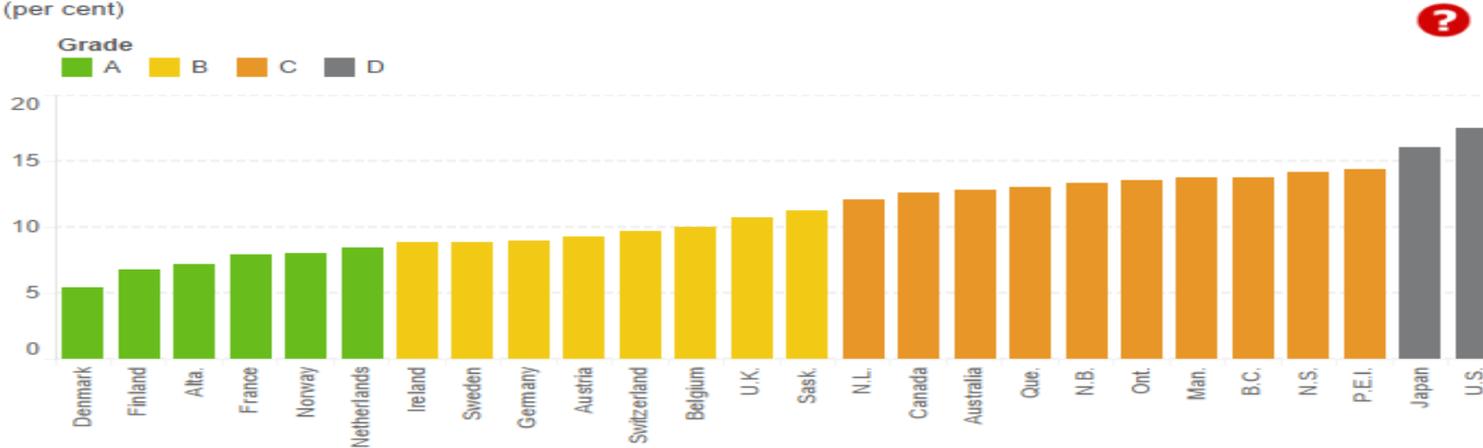
- Canada has no official, government mandated poverty line.
- Statistics Canada reports:
  - Low-Income Measure (LIM)
  - Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO)
  - Market-Basket Measure (MBM)

# Definitions: “Poverty” measures

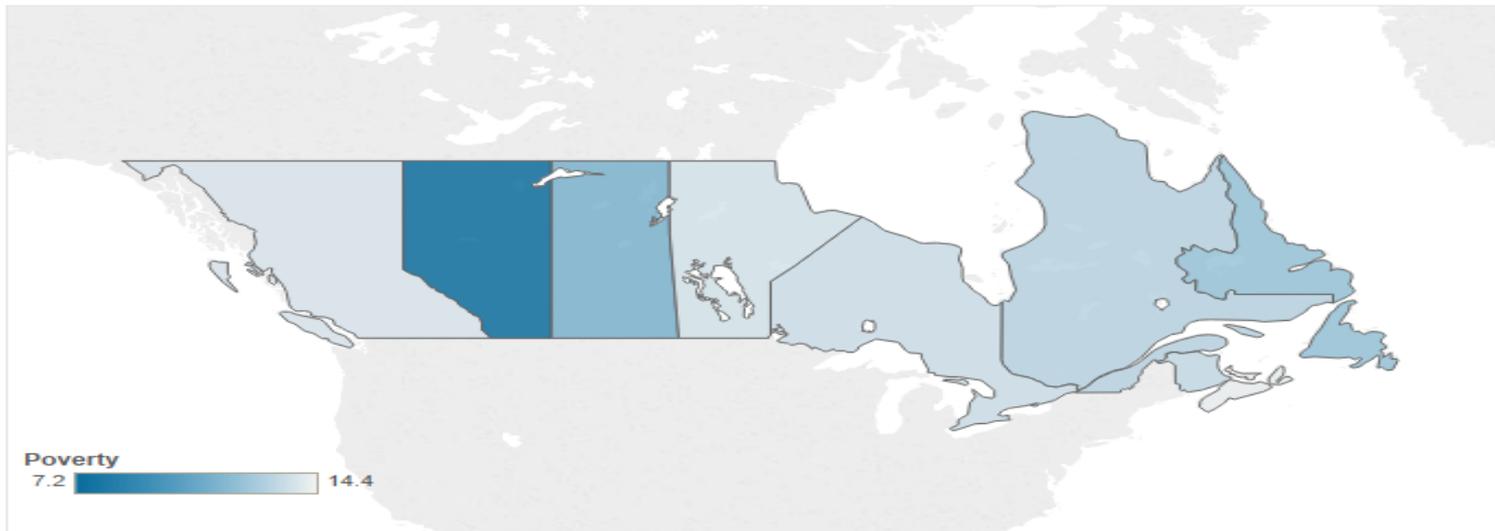
- LIM half the median income of an equivalent household.
- LICO level at which a family may be in difficult circumstances because it spends a higher proportion of its income on necessities
- MBM the amount of income needed by a household to meet its needs, defined not just in bare subsistence terms, but also in terms of what is needed to approach "creditable" community norms.

# Stats and trends

Poverty Rate, Provinces and International Peers, 2013 or Most Recent Year (per cent)



Sources: The Conference Board of Canada; OECD.

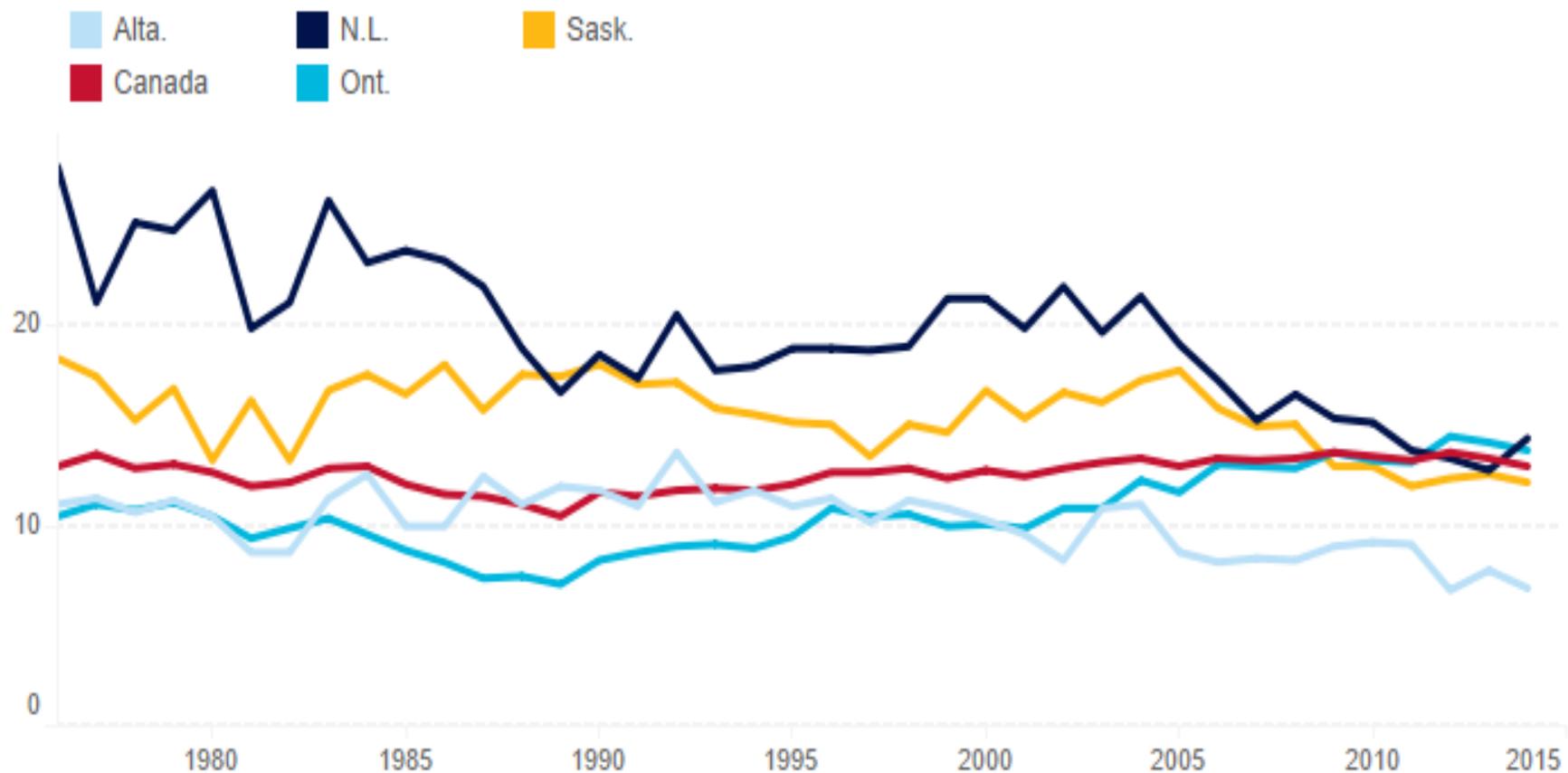


# Stats and trends: Ontario statistics

- LIM = 14%
- LICO = 9%
- MBM = 10.5%
- Household measure (children in households spending 40% on housing 40% of LICO) = 5%
- Foodbank 335,000 people a month
  
- ODSP OW = 6.3%

# Poverty Rate (per cent)

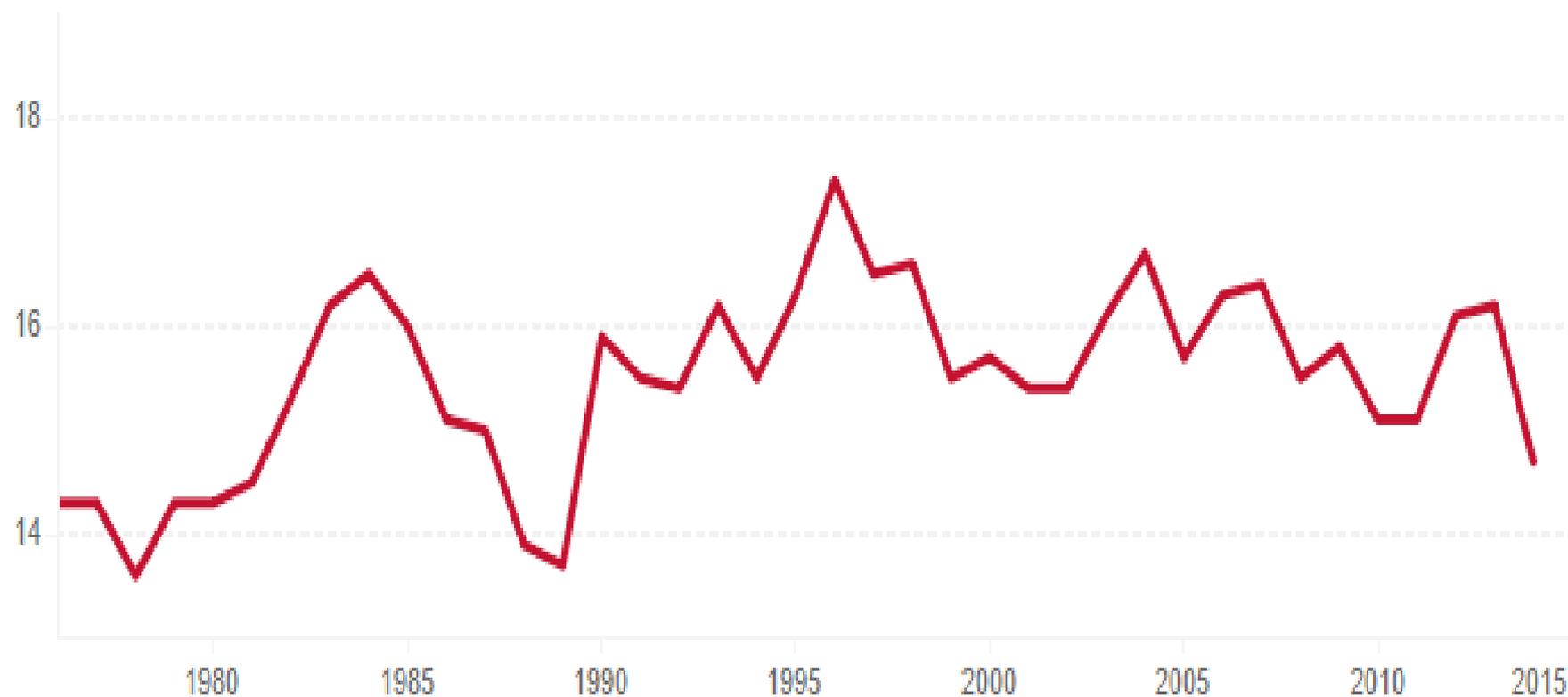
Province  
Multiple values



Source: Statistics Canada.

## Child Poverty Remains at Levels Seen in the Late 1970s

(poverty rate, Canada, children under 18, per cent)



Source: Statistics Canada.

# Stats and trends: Risk groups

- Indigenous
- Newcomer
- Immigrant
- Racialised
- Refugee
- Women
- Single people
- Physical or mental disability
- Trend upwards for older women...

# Many people on benefits below LICO

		% of LICO. (median wage)
Ontario Works		
Single parent	1 child	82 (40)
Single parents	2 children	82 (41)
couple	1 child	70 (35)
odsp		
Single parent	1 child	108 (54)
Single parent	2 children	105 (52.5)
couple	1 child	95 (47.5)

What is the evidence of a link  
between income and child  
outcomes

# Review of National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth Canada Phipps and Lethbridge 2006

- Associations between income and outcomes
  - cognitive outcomes (math and reading scores) +++
  - behavioural outcomes +++
  - physical health +++
  - ‘social/emotional’ outcomes except hyperactivity +
- Associations greatest in low income groups
- Income most important for younger children

So, if we decrease low wages  
we will have more equitable  
educational outcomes?

# Story 2 fundamental causes



# Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities: Theory, Evidence, and Policy Implications

Journal of Health and Social Behavior  
51(S) S28–S40  
© American Sociological Association 2010  
DOI: 10.1177/0022146510383498  
<http://jhsb.sagepub.com>  


Jo C. Phelan<sup>1</sup>, Bruce G. Link<sup>1,2</sup>, and  
Parisa Tehranifar<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Link and Phelan (1995) developed the theory of fundamental causes to explain why the association between socioeconomic status (SES) and mortality has persisted despite radical changes in the diseases and risk factors that are presumed to explain it. They proposed that the enduring association results because SES embodies an array of resources, such as money, knowledge, prestige, power, and beneficial social connections that protect health no matter what mechanisms are relevant at any given time. In this article, we explicate the theory, review key findings, discuss refinements and limits to the theory, and discuss implications for health policies that might reduce health inequalities. We advocate policies that encourage medical and other health-promoting advances while at the same time breaking or weakening the link between these advances and socioeconomic resources. This can be accomplished either by reducing disparities in socioeconomic resources themselves or by developing interventions that, by their nature, are more equally distributed across SES groups.

# Poverty is not just money

- [United Nations](#): Fundamentally, poverty is the inability of having choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation

**We need to think broader than  
income alone and look at  
social forces that shape  
poverty's impact of education.**

# Results from important studies

# CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

- Influential study
- 17,000 people in it Southern California
- Asked about first 18 years of life
- 1995-1997 and continuing

# ACE categories

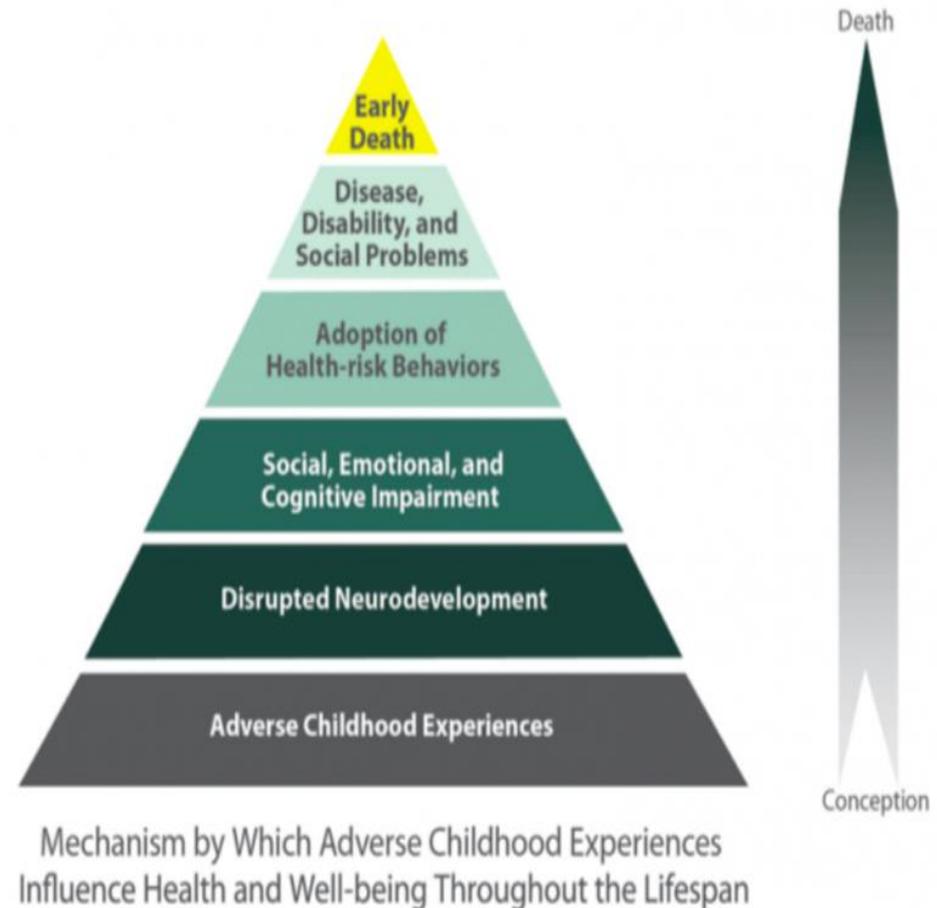
- Abuse
  - **Emotional abuse**
  - **Physical abuse**
  - **Sexual abuse**
- Household Challenges
  - **Mother treated violently**
  - **Household substance abuse**
  - **Mental illness in household**
  - **Parental separation or divorce**
  - **Criminal household member**
- Neglect
  - **Emotional neglect:**
    - Someone in your family helped you feel important or special, you felt loved, people in your family looked out for each other and felt close to each other, and your family was a source of strength and support.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Physical neglect:**
    - There was someone to take care of you, protect you, and take you to the doctor if you needed it<sup>2</sup>, you didn't have enough to eat, your parents were too drunk or too high to take care of you, and you had to wear dirty cloth

# Correlation between ACE's and:

- Poorer academic achievement
- Poorer work performance
- Financial stress
- Intimate partner violence and sexual violence
- Risky behaviours (drug use, early smoking/ sex/ pregnancies)
- Physical illness (heart disease, liver disease, COAD)
- Mental illness
- Substance misuse disorder (alcohol, drugs, smoking)

# Models of ACE impact on development

- Toxic stress in childhood damages developing brain leading to multiple vulnerabilities
- Trauma impacts stress response leading to poorer coping and social problems



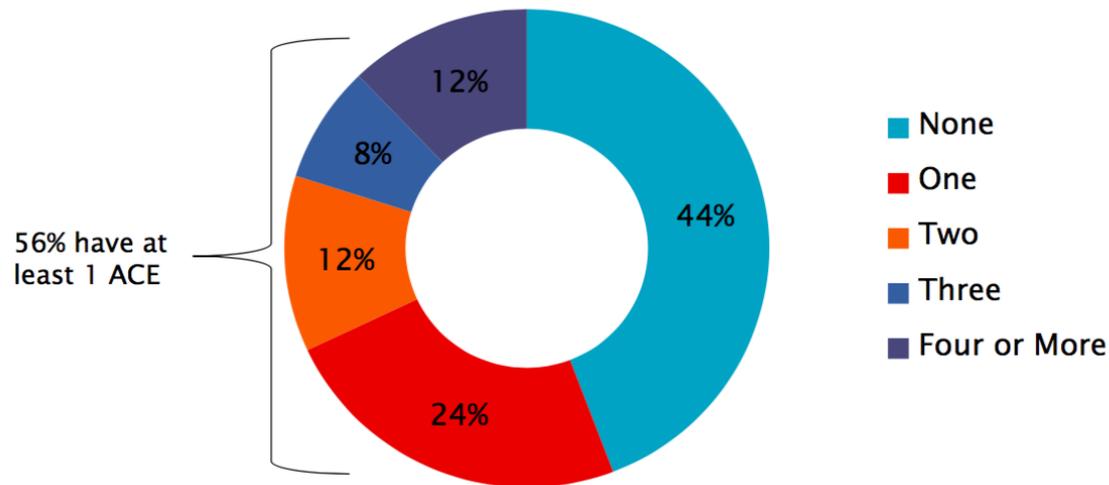
# Alberta ACE Study

slides Sheila MacDonald (U of Calgary)  
and Suzanne Tough (Alberta Centre for CFC Research)



# Alberta study 1200 people in 2013

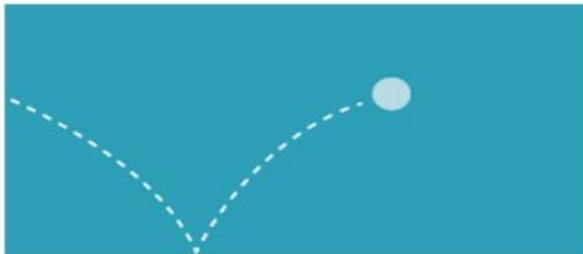
How Common are ACEs?



# Alberta Theory

## Resilience

- ▶ Plasticity in brains suggests that resilience factors can mitigate or reverse the potential for poor outcomes



### Resilience factors borne out of ACE concepts include:

- *Asking for help*
- *Developing trusting relationships*
- *Developing positive coping strategies*
- *Paying attention to feelings*
- *Developing a positive outlook*

# ACEs more common in children living in poverty

# The impact of poverty on educational outcomes for children

HB Ferguson PhD<sup>1,2</sup>, S Bovaird MPH<sup>1</sup>, MP Mueller PhD<sup>1</sup>

HB Ferguson, S Bovaird, MP Mueller. The impact of poverty on educational outcomes for children. *Paediatr Child Health* 2007;12(8):701-706.

Over the past decade, the unfortunate reality is that the income gap has widened between Canadian families. Educational outcomes are one of the key areas influenced by family incomes. Children from low-income families often start school already behind their peers who come from more affluent families, as shown in measures of school readiness. The incidence, depth, duration and timing of poverty all influence a child's educational attainment, along with community characteristics and social networks. However, both Canadian and international interventions have shown that the effects of poverty can be reduced using sustainable interventions. Paediatricians and family doctors have many opportunities to influence readiness for school and educational success in primary care settings.

**Key Words:** *Education; Interventions; Poverty; School readiness*

## Les répercussions de la pauvreté sur l'éducation des enfants

Depuis dix ans, l'écart des revenus s'est creusé entre les familles canadiennes, ce qui est une triste réalité. L'éducation est l'un des principaux domaines sur lesquels influe le revenu familial. Souvent, lorsqu'ils commencent l'école, les enfants de familles à faible revenu accusent déjà un retard par rapport à leurs camarades qui proviennent de familles plus aisées, tel que le démontrent les mesures de maturité scolaire. L'incidence, l'importance, la durée et le moment de la pauvreté ont tous une influence sur le rendement scolaire de l'enfant, de même que les caractéristiques de la communauté et les réseaux sociaux. Cependant, tant au Canada que sur la scène internationale, il est possible de réduire les effets de la pauvreté au moyen d'interventions soutenues. Les pédiatres et les médecins de familles ont de nombreuses occasions d'agir sur la maturité et la réussite scolaire dans le cadre des soins de premier recours.

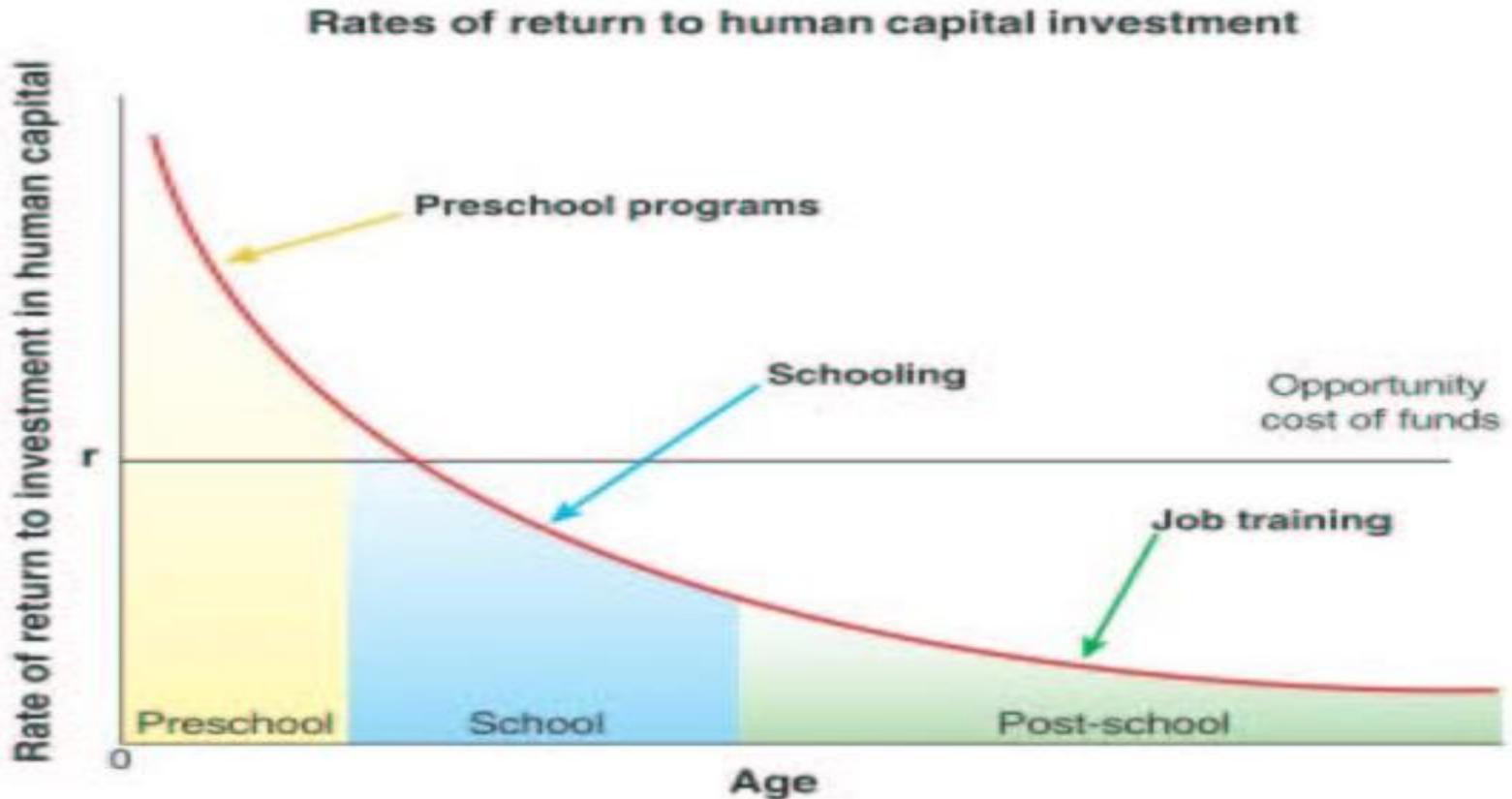
# Ferguson et al

- Poverty decreases a child's readiness for school
- Home has a strong impact on school readiness.
- Parents living in poverty less likely to have support they need, so their children are:
  - less likely to receive the stimulation
  - less likely to attain social skills that prepare them for school
  - More likely exposed to parental inconsistency (with regard to daily routines and parenting),
  - Exposed to more frequent changes of primary caregivers,
  - Less likely to be supervised or see positive role models

# Six factors of poverty related to readiness for school (Ferguson)

- Incidence of poverty
- Depth of poverty,
- Duration of poverty,
- Timing of poverty (eg, age of child),
- Community characteristics (eg, concentration of poverty and crime in neighborhood, and school characteristics) and
- The impact poverty has on the child's social network (parents, relatives and neighbors).

# Teachers are a great investment James Heckman Nobel Laureate



# Reversing effect of poverty (Ferguson et al)

- Decreasing the risk factors in a child's environment increases a child's potential for development and educational attainment.
- Prevention and intervention programs that target health concerns result in increased cognitive ability
- Parent-child relationship has been proven to have the greatest influence on reversing the impact of poverty.
- parenting style:
  - predictability of behaviour,
  - social responsiveness,
  - verbal behaviour,
  - mutual attention and
  - positive role modelling
- parental involvement,
  - frequency of outings
  - problem-based play

# Interventions reversing effect of poverty (Ferguson et al)

- The High/Scope active learning approach.
  - is a comprehensive early childhood curriculum. It uses cooperative work and communication skills to have children ‘learn by doing’.
- The Abecedarian project.
  - This project enlisted children between infancy and five years of age from low-income families to receive a high-quality educational intervention that was individualized to their needs.
- Chicago Child Parent Center program.
  - The intervention targets students and parents who are between preschool and grade 3 through language-based activities, outreach activities, ongoing staff development and health services.

# Reversing effect of poverty (Ferguson et al)

- Early education to help prepare for school
- Schools focus on equity of outcomes
- Action on holiday skills loss
- Wider based curriculums including sports and arts to increase school readiness and progress
- Keep school heterogenous with regards to SES
  - (ie, all types of streaming result in markedly poor outcomes for disadvantaged children and youth).
- Specific programs with educational and social interventions to promote equity

# Older learners: Pathways to Education

- The program was founded in Toronto's Regent Park community in 2001
- Pathways now operates across Canada with Program locations in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Alberta, and Saskatchewan.
- Pathways addresses systemic barriers to education by providing leadership, expertise, and a community-based program proven to lower dropout rates.

# Pathways to Education

- **Tutoring** - Academic support in all core subjects
- **Mentoring** - Social supports focused on issues such as social skills building, leadership, health and career planning
- **Student-Parent Support Workers** – An individual assigned to each student to provide advocacy support, help them problem solve and connect with parents, schools, teachers etc.
- **Financial Support:** Buss tickets to attend and sometimes bursaries are available to students based on eligibility criteria

# Pathways to Education

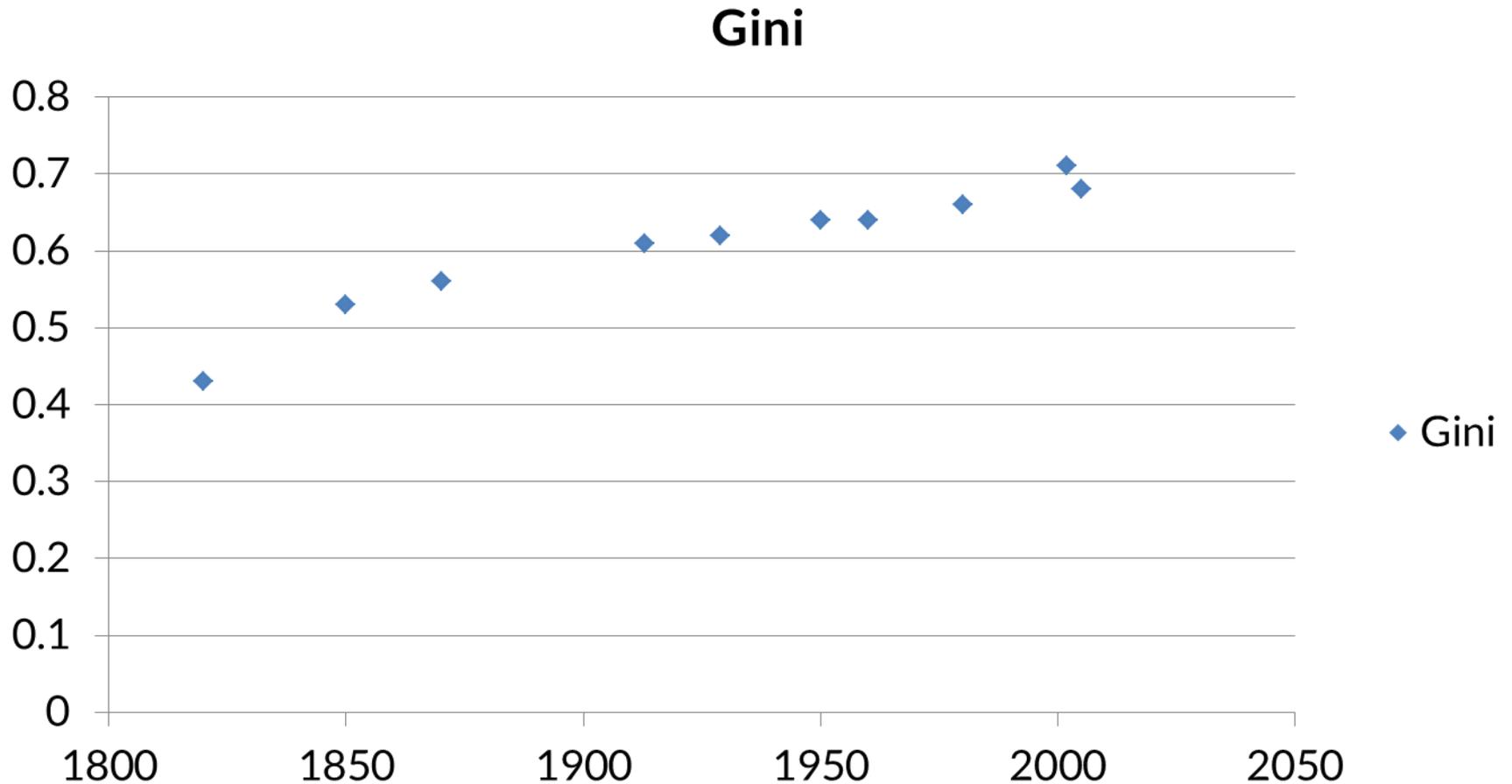
- Helps youth in low-income communities graduate from high school and successfully transition onto post-secondary education, training, or employment
- Reduces high school drop-out rates by as much as 70 per cent,
- Increases rate at which youth go on to college or university by up to 300 per cent
- .

**If we put in place comprehensive high quality, evidence-based pre-school education; modify schools to ensure equity and produce interventions like Pathways to catch those who fall through the cracks we will break the link between poverty and poorer education.**

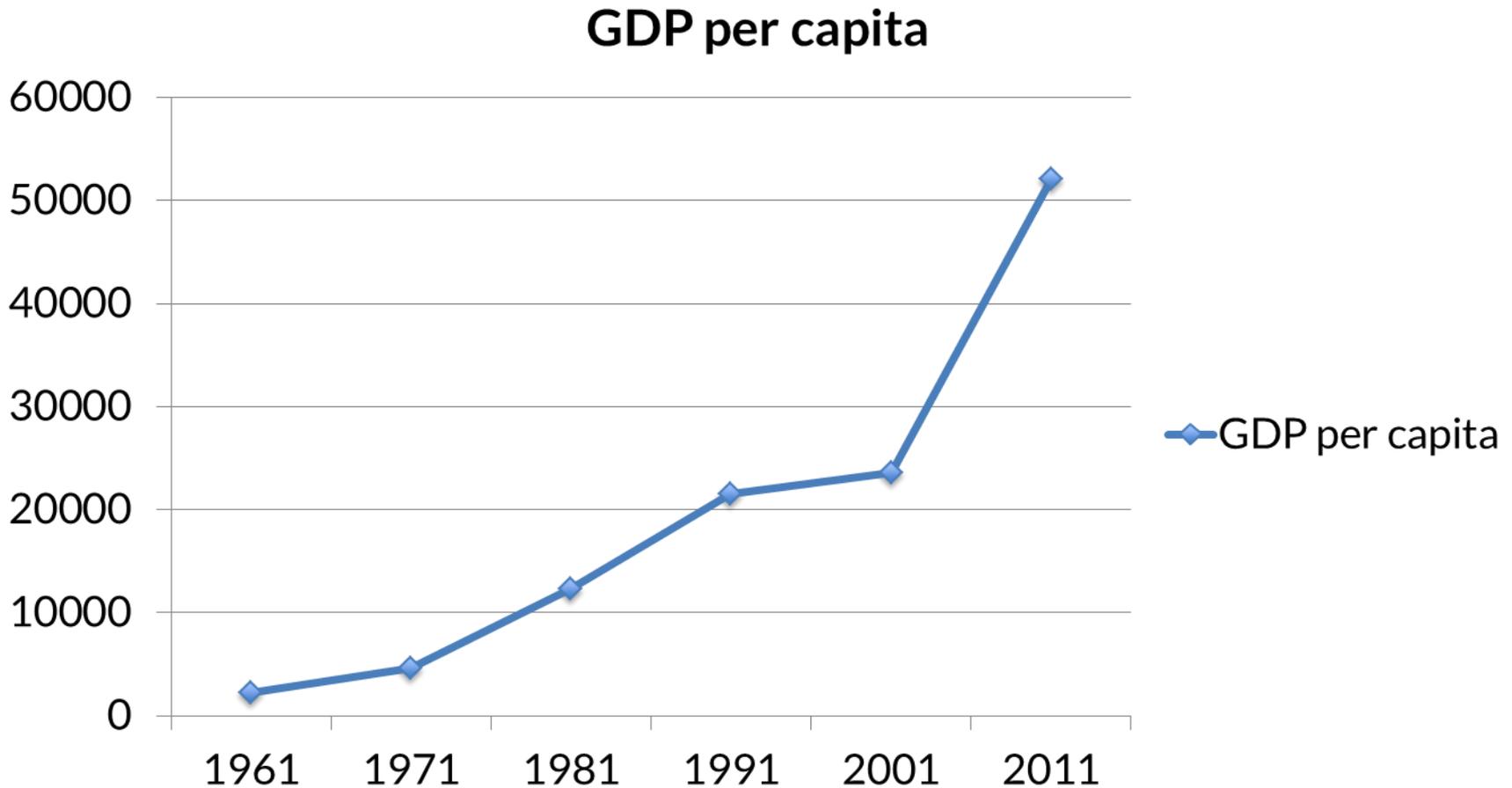
# Story 3 - MASH



# World less equal now than 200 years ago (UN and World Bank)

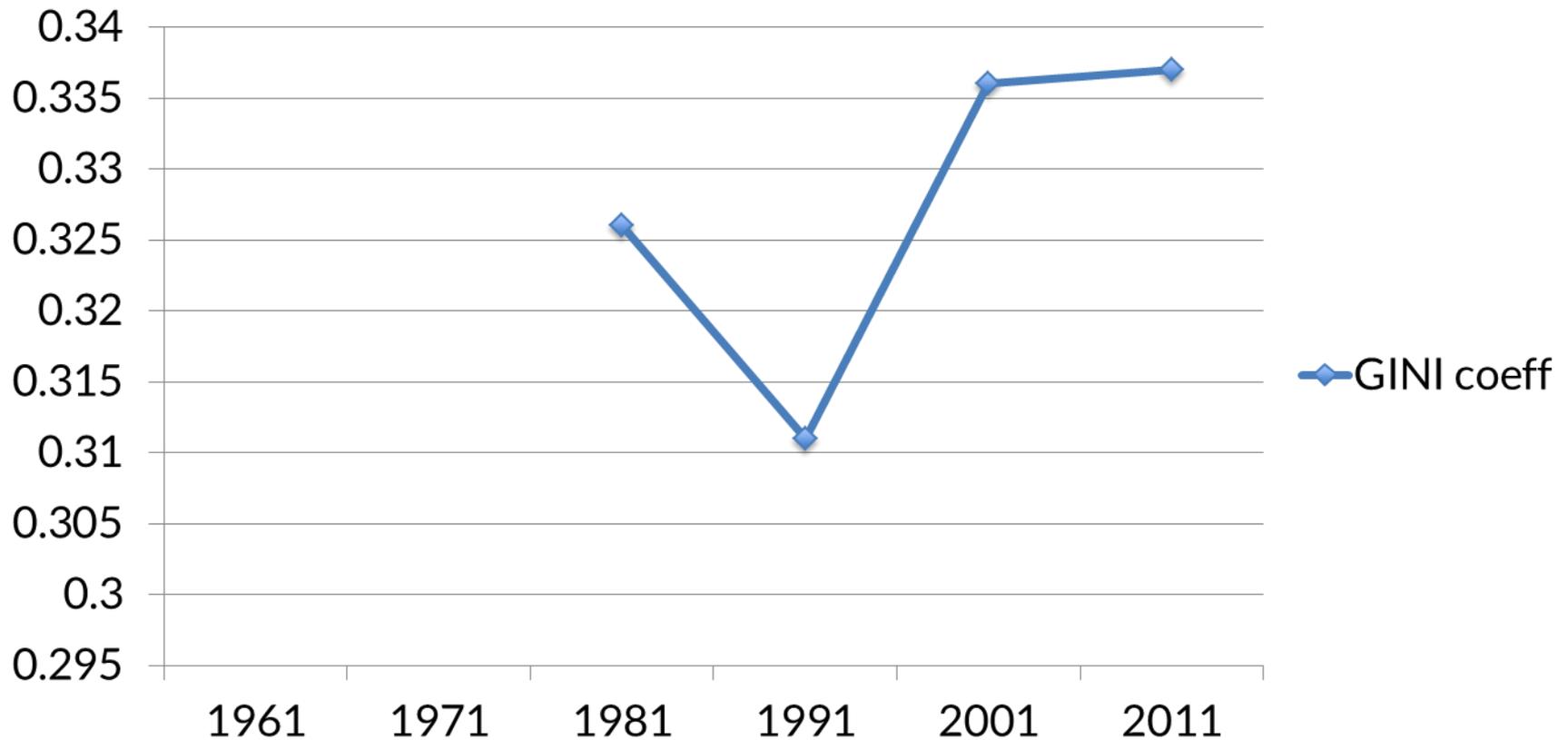


# Canada's GDP per capita 20 fold increase since 1961 (\$US World Bank)

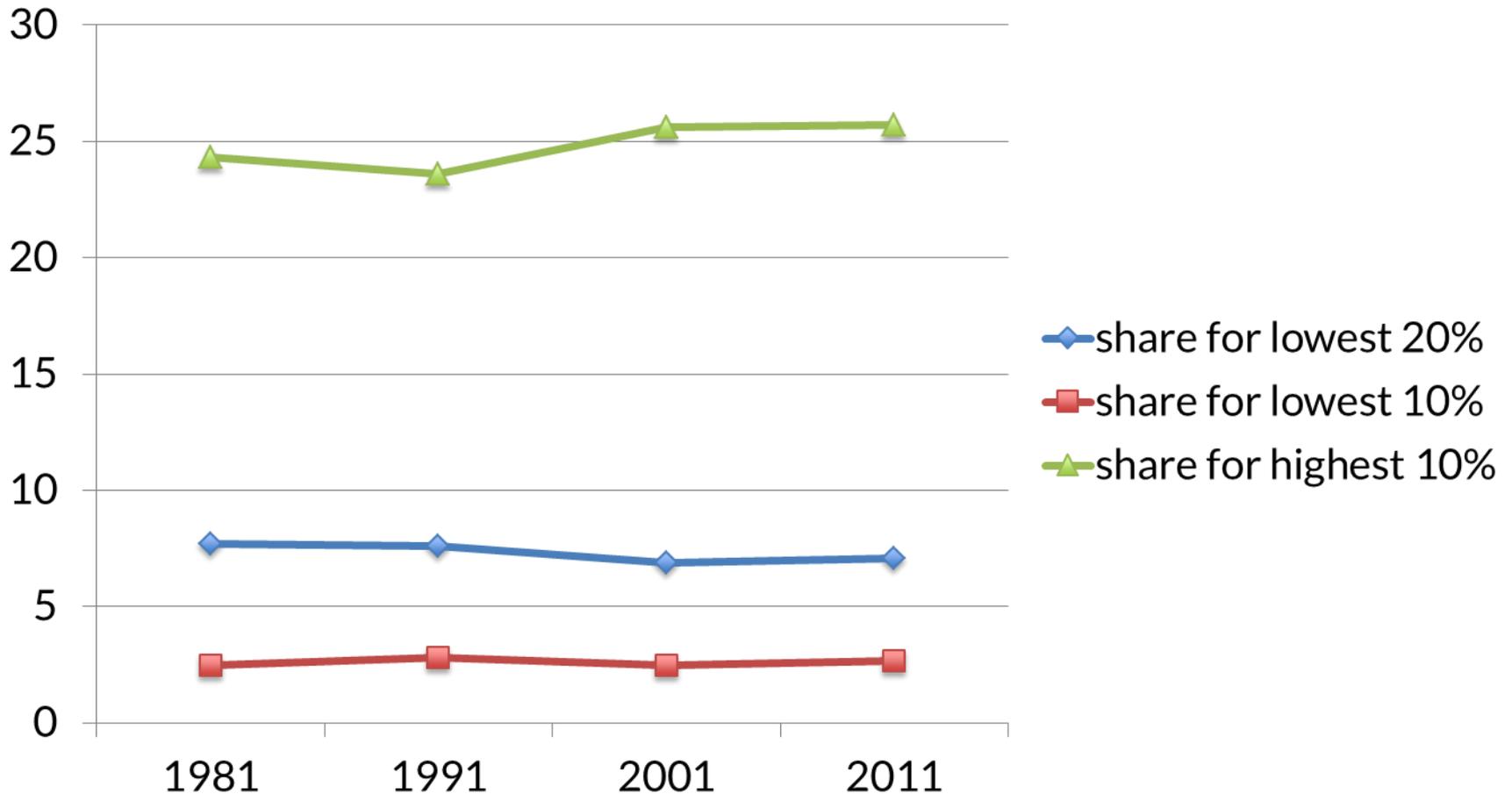


# Canada more unequal with GINI change of 10% in 30 years

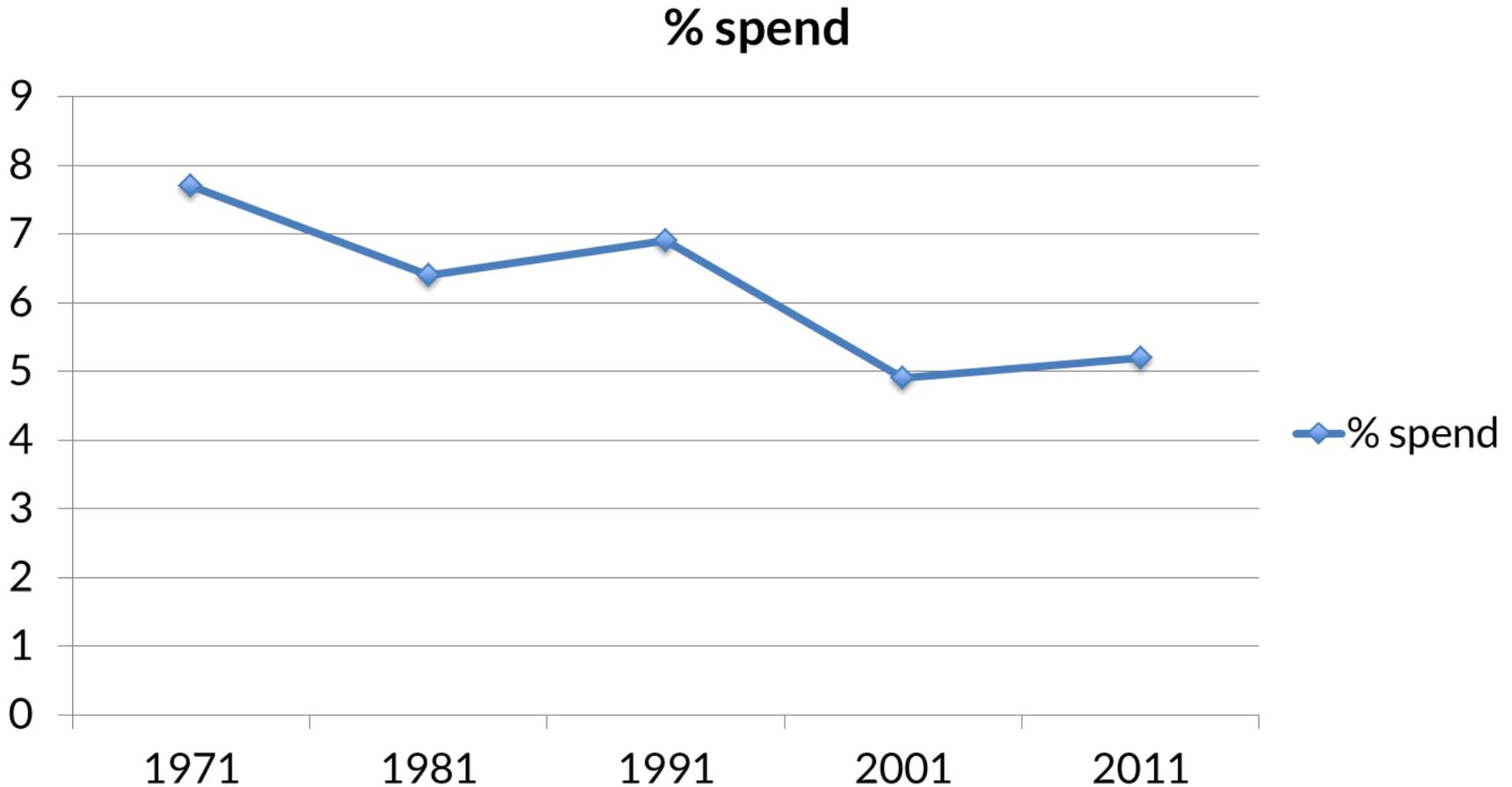
GINI coeff



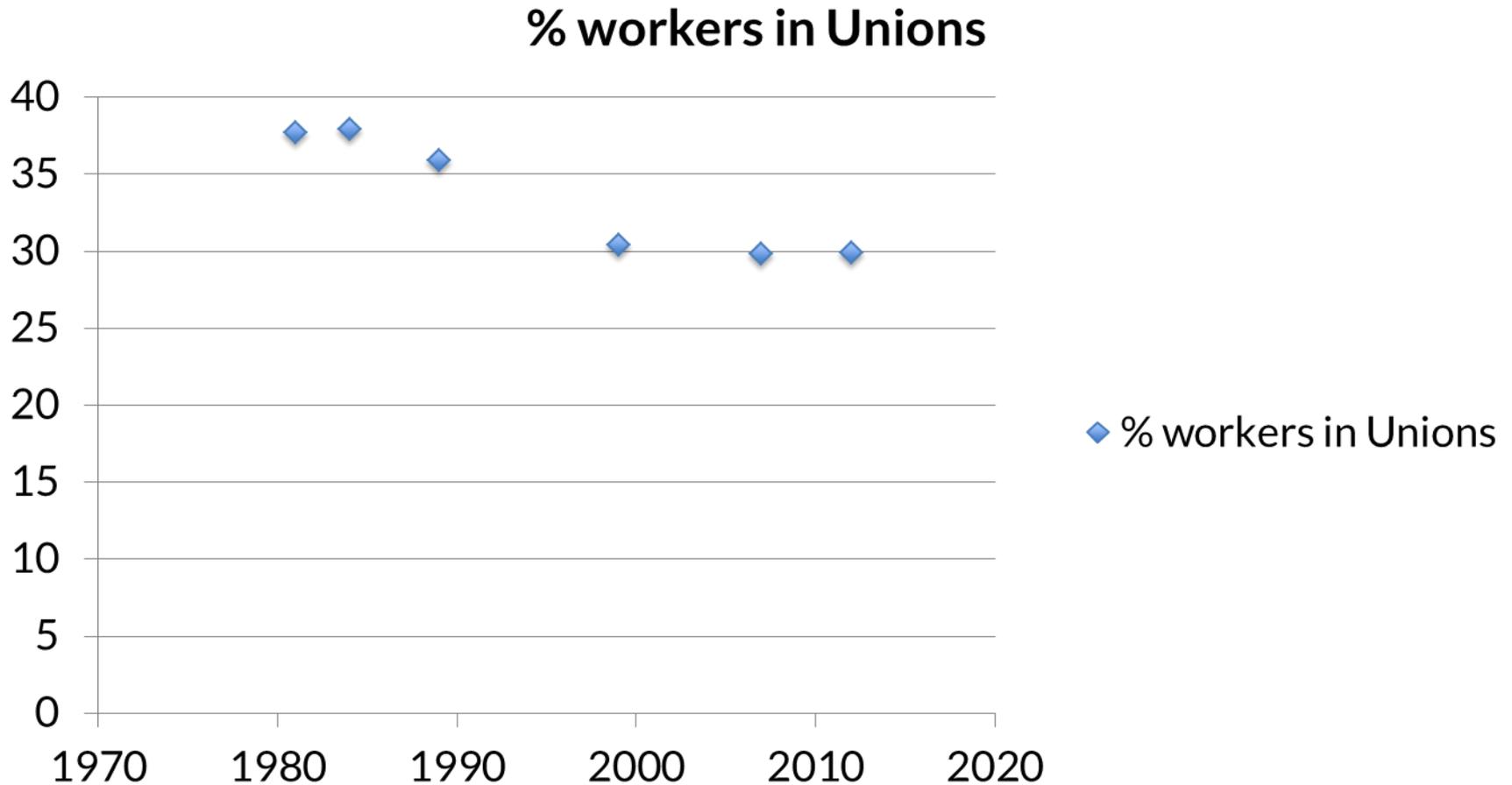
# Poor Stay Poor: % of national income for poorest slightly lower



# Canada's government spend on education as % of GDP decreased



# Union Membership Down in Canada



# Wider factors need to be dealt with

- Wages decreased in real terms for most people
- Middle class are decreasing
- Income inequality increasing
- Parents stressed and with less time
- Mental health problems increasing
- Increased precarious work
- Increase unpredictability of work
- Lower work protections
- Communities struggling

**If we are to decrease impact of poverty on children's schooling we need to decrease the impact of low income on their parents: eg upstream support preconception, higher wages, better work life balance, less precarious work, better affordable childcare and housing**

# Ontario's poverty indicators for poverty reduction strategy

1. Healthy birth weights
2. Children's readiness to learn in school by kindergarten
3. Students meeting academic standards (Grade 3 and 6)
4. High school graduation rates
5. Children living in poverty
6. Children living in deep poverty
7. Young adults not in education, employment or training
8. Adults unemployed for more than six months
9. Poverty rates of vulnerable groups
10. Housing affordability

# Summary

- Mind the Gap
- Fill in the gap with new thinking
  
- Fundamental social forces
- Best interventions to focus on fundamental causes of inequities
  
- MASH
- Do the educational work but do not forget wider social forces

# Thank you

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