

Health Inequalities in Europe: Setting the Stage for Progressive Policy Action

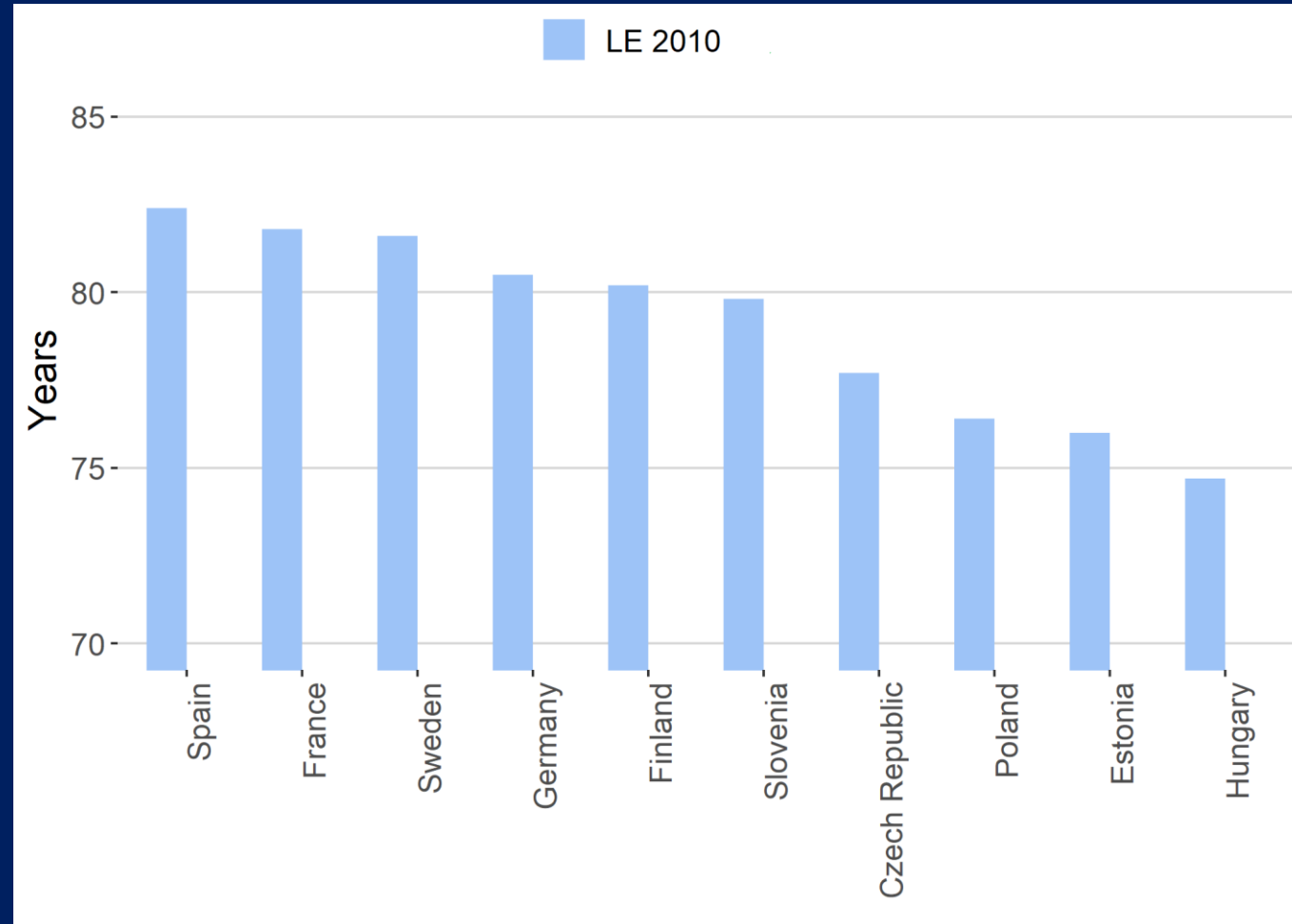
Timon Forster

Alexander Kentikelenis

Clare Bambra

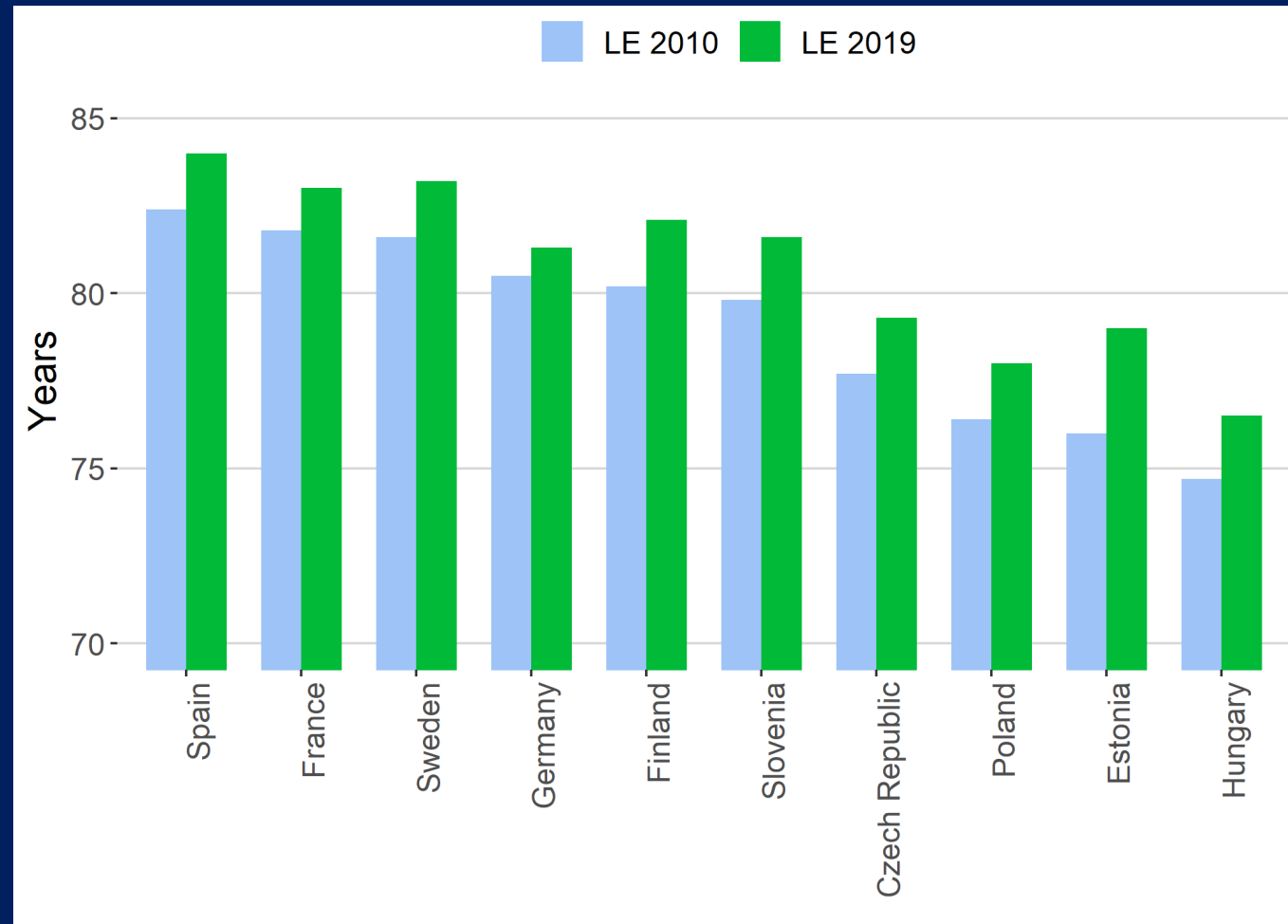
In some ways, the health of Europeans is
better than ever

Life expectancy at birth



Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2021).

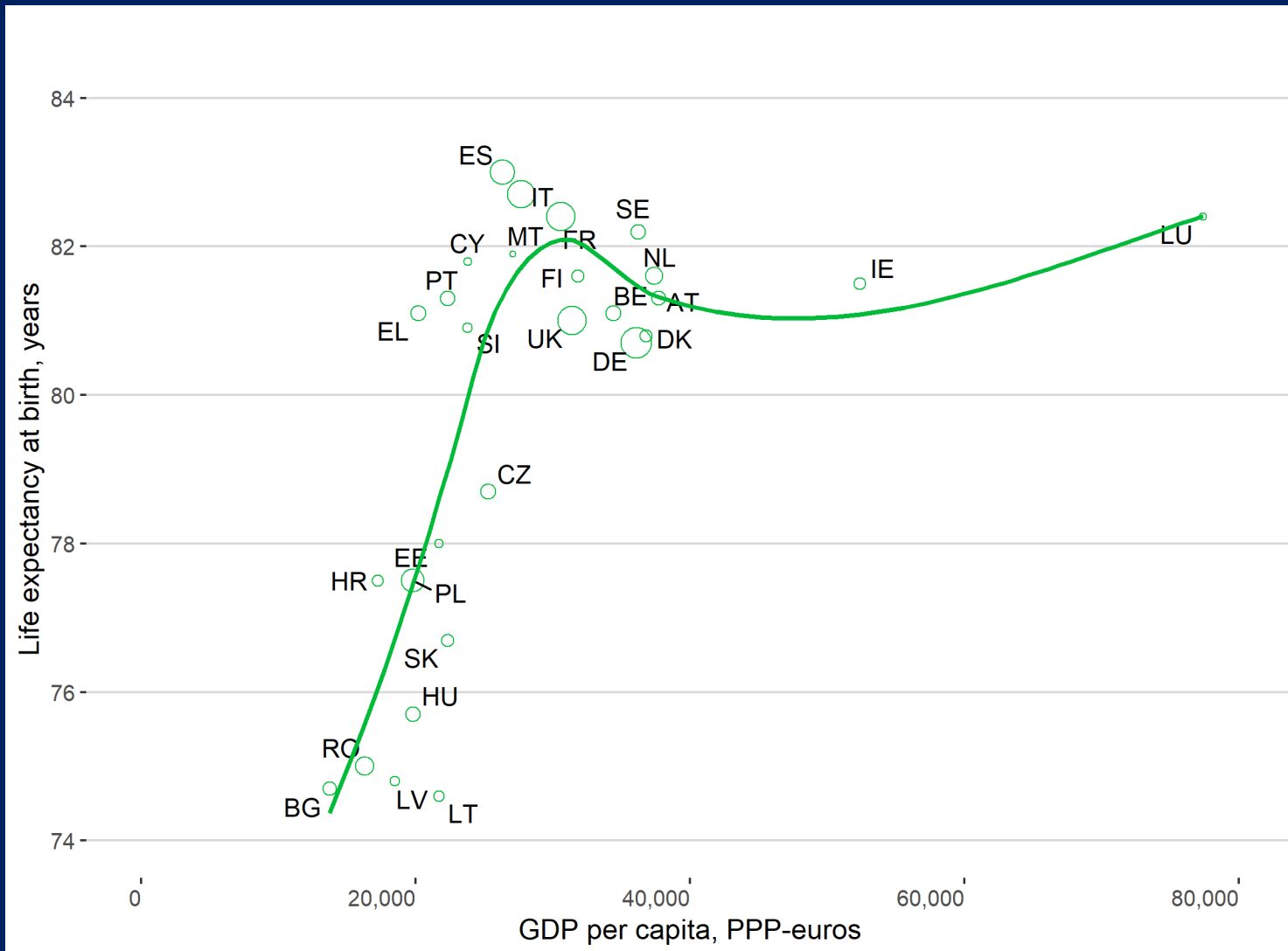
Life expectancy at birth



Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2021).

But substantial inequalities
in health persist

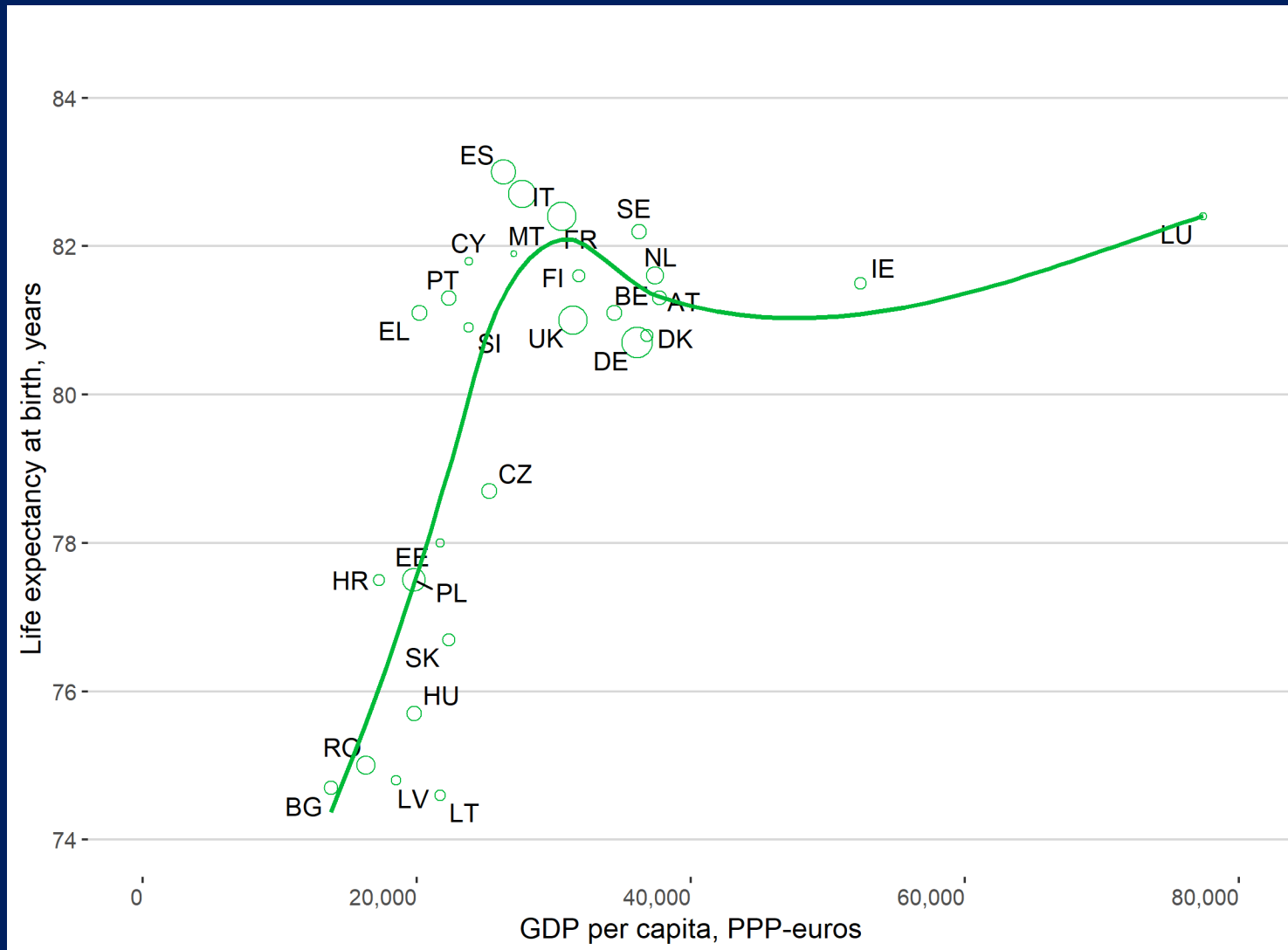
Between country inequalities



Note: Data refer to 2015.
Observations are weighted by the relative population size, indicated by circle size.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

Between country inequalities

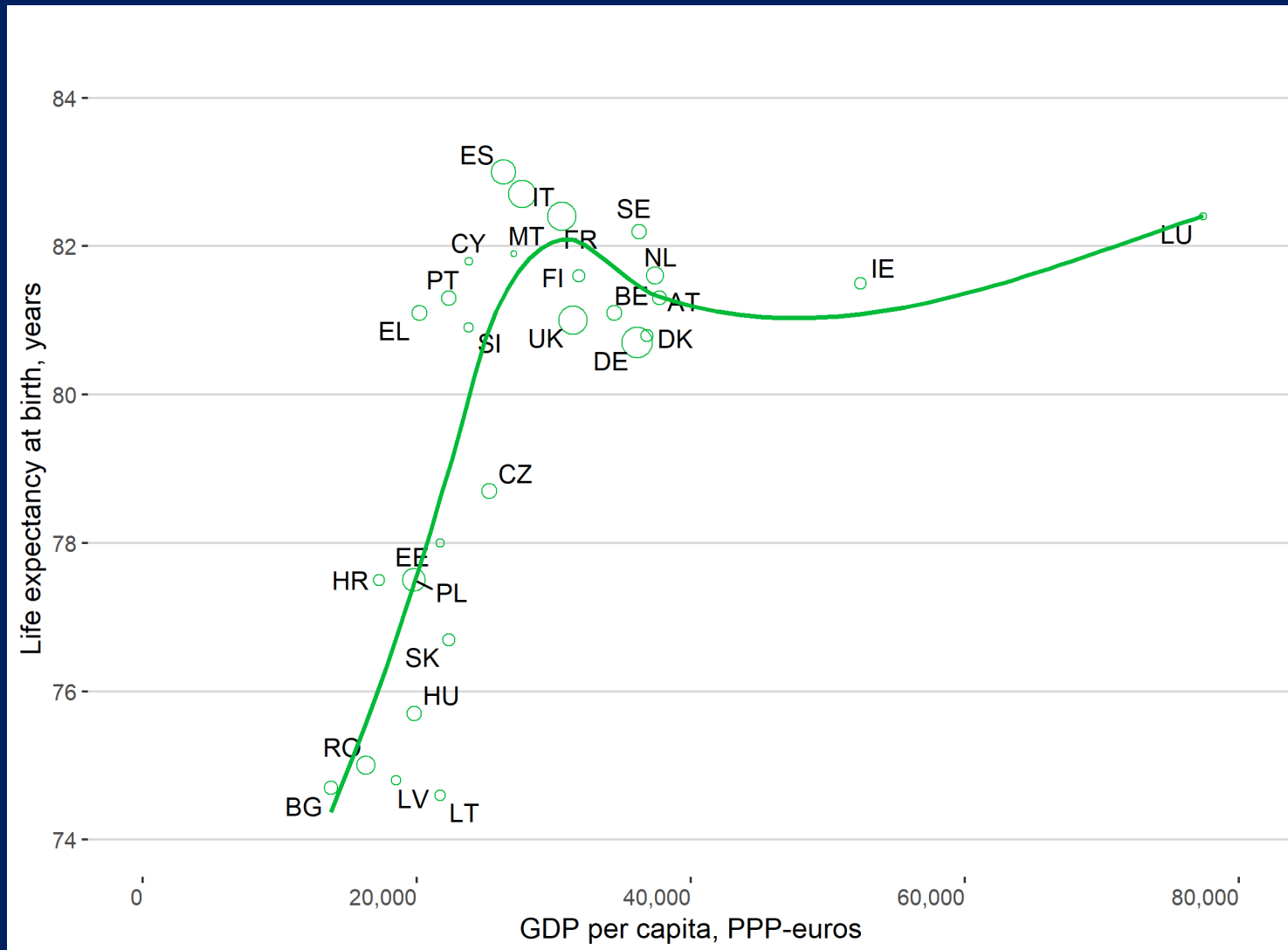


Life expectancy is higher in richer countries

Note: Data refer to 2015. Observations are weighted by the relative population size, indicated by circle size.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

Between country inequalities

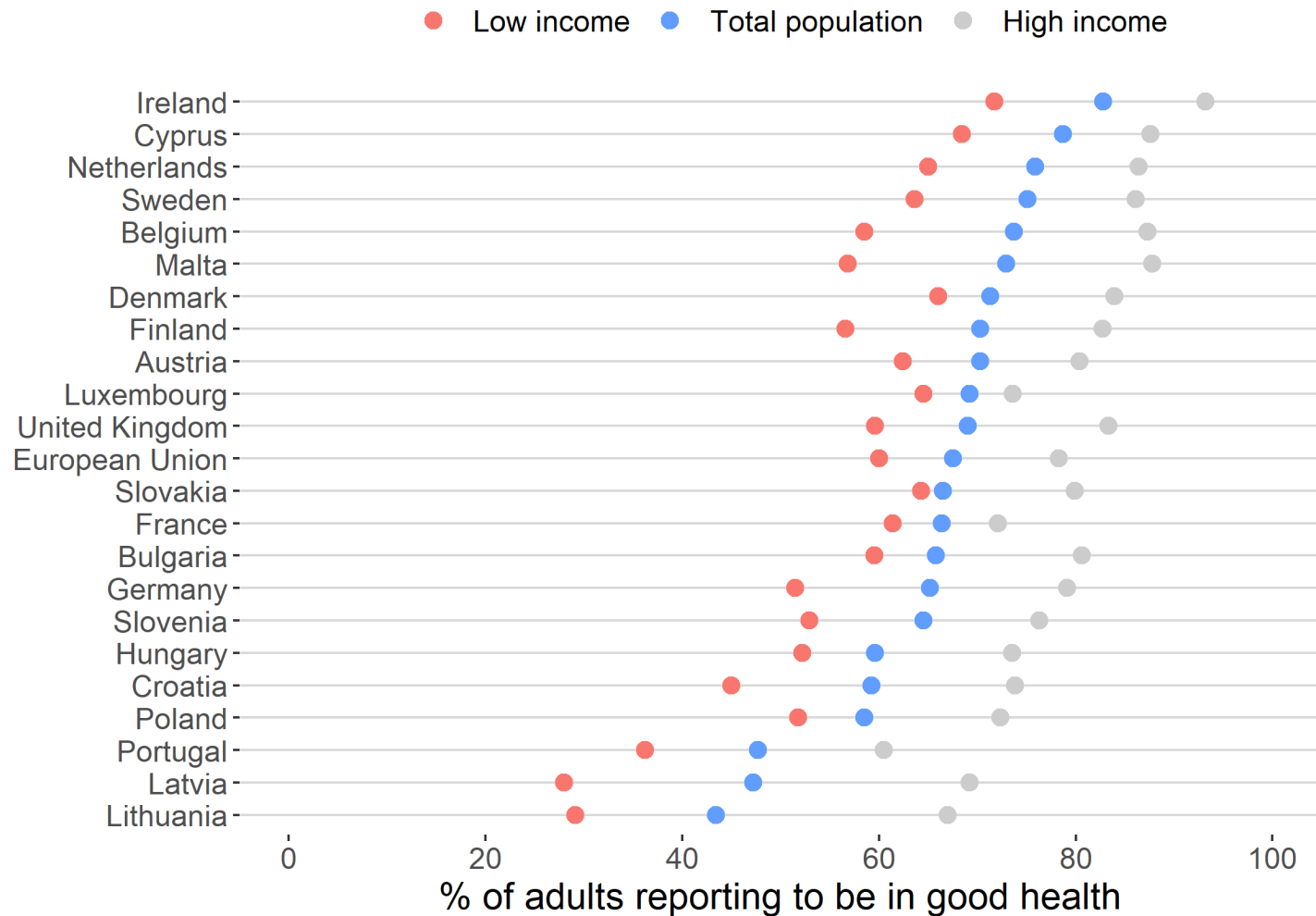


Life expectancy lower in Eastern European countries

Note: Data refer to 2015. Observations are weighted by the relative population size, indicated by circle size.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

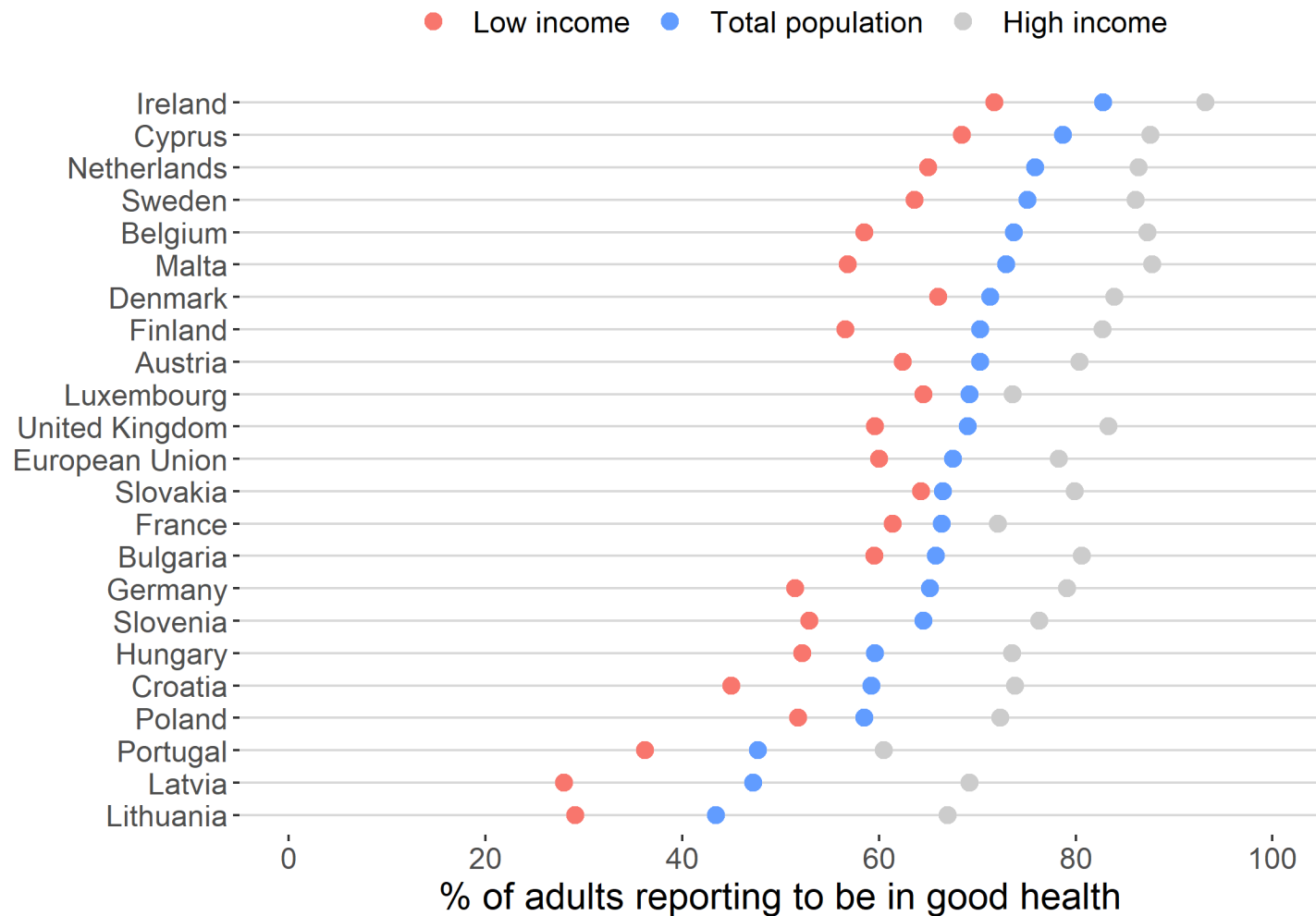
Within country inequalities



Note: Data refer to 2016.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

Within country inequalities

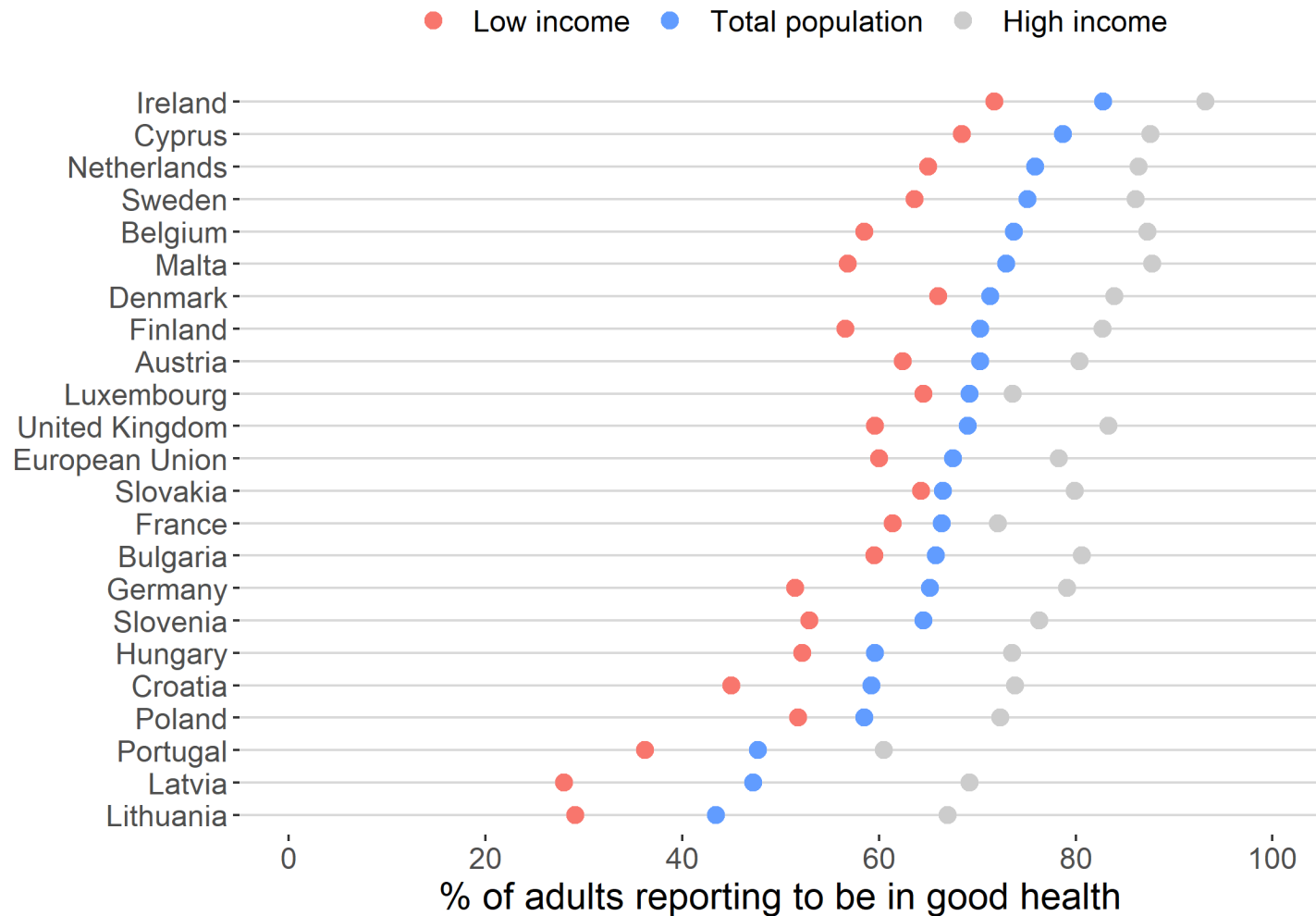


Proportion of individuals reporting good health increases with income...

Note: Data refer to 2016.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

Within country inequalities

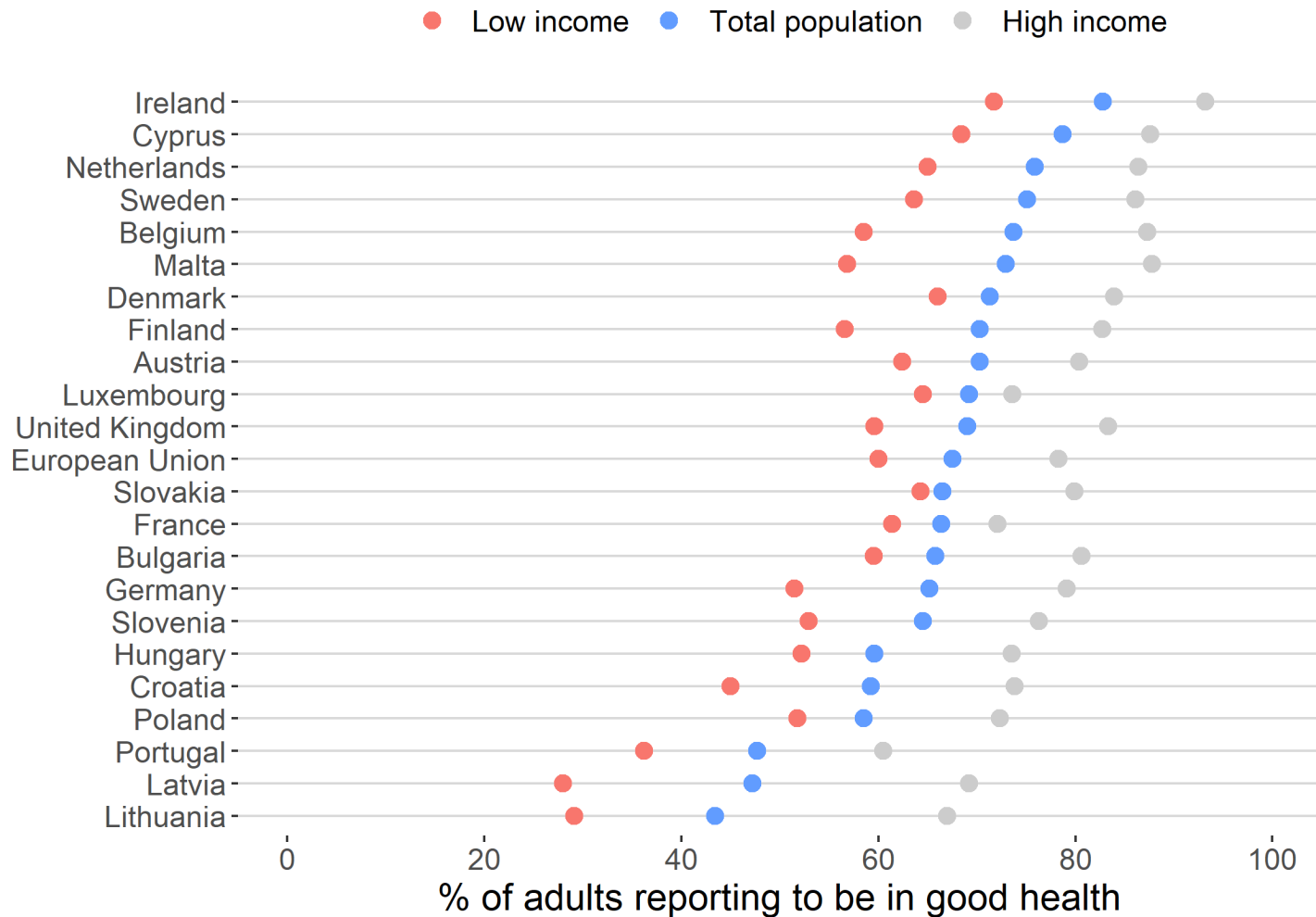


...but still considerable variation!

Note: Data refer to 2016.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

Within country inequalities

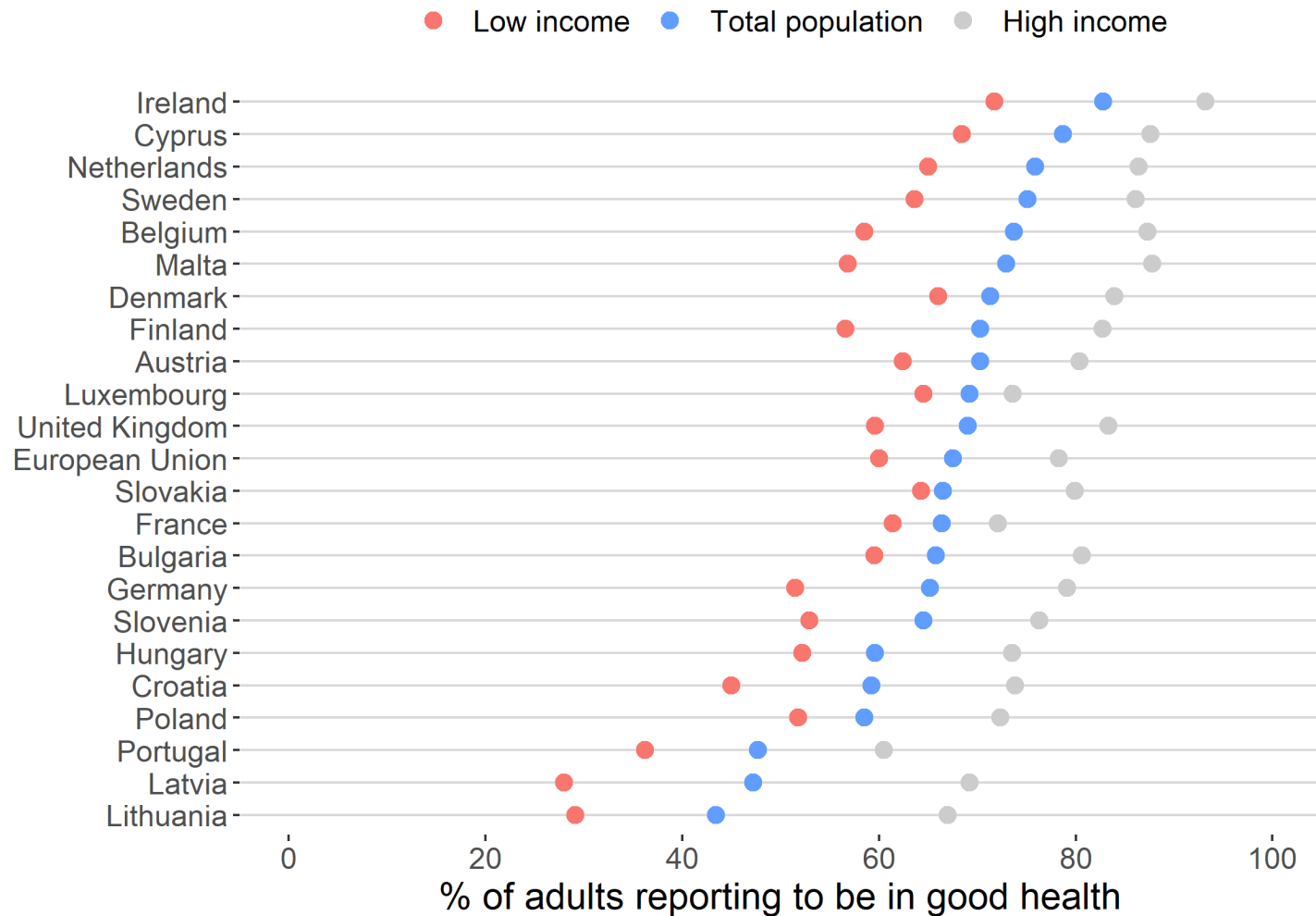


EU:
60% low-income individuals reporting good health vs. 78% high-inc.

Note: Data refer to 2016.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

Within country inequalities



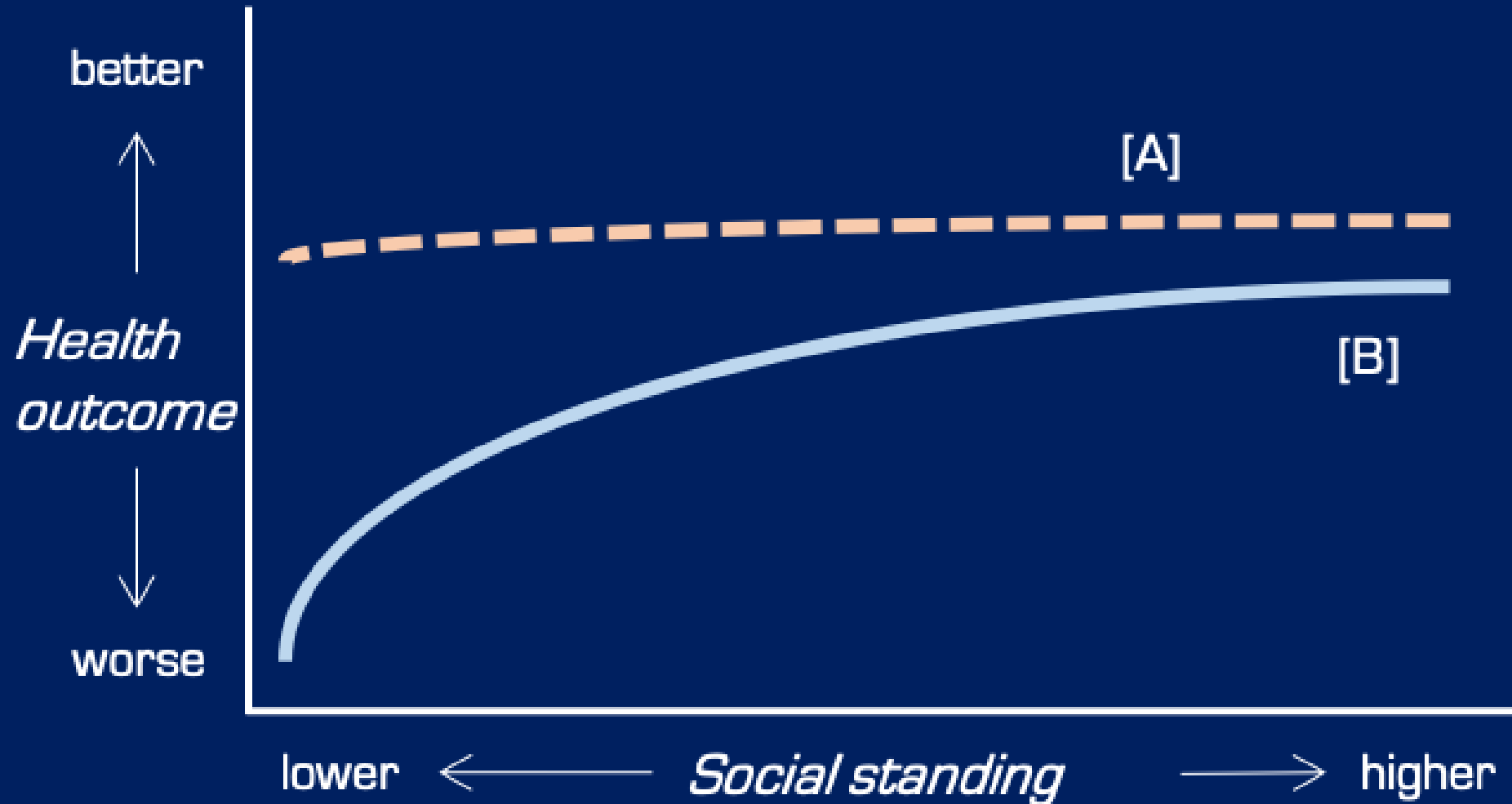
Slovenia (2019):
49% low-income
individuals reporting
good health
vs. 79% high-inc.

Note: Data refer to 2016.

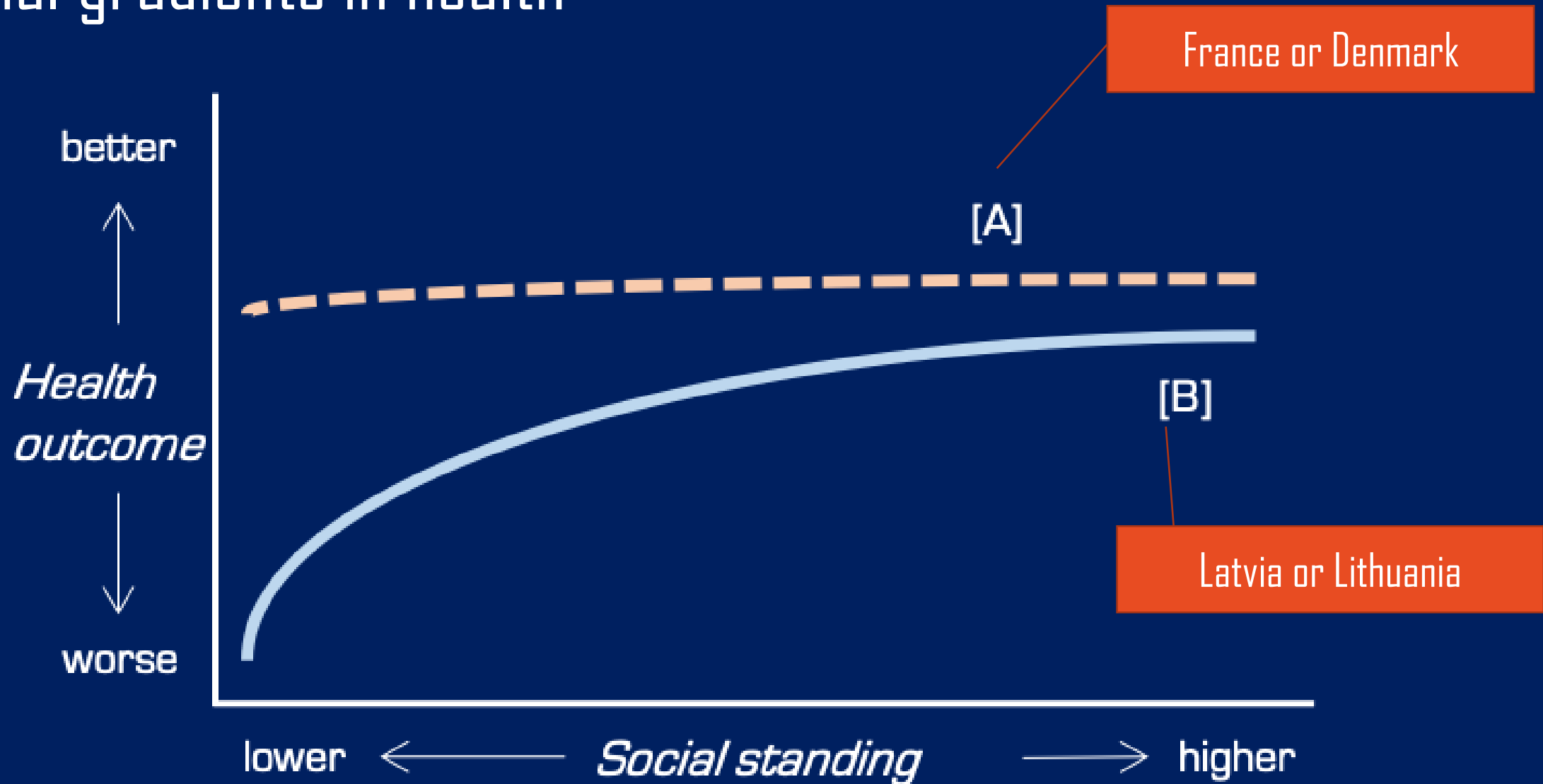
Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

How to understand
health inequalities?

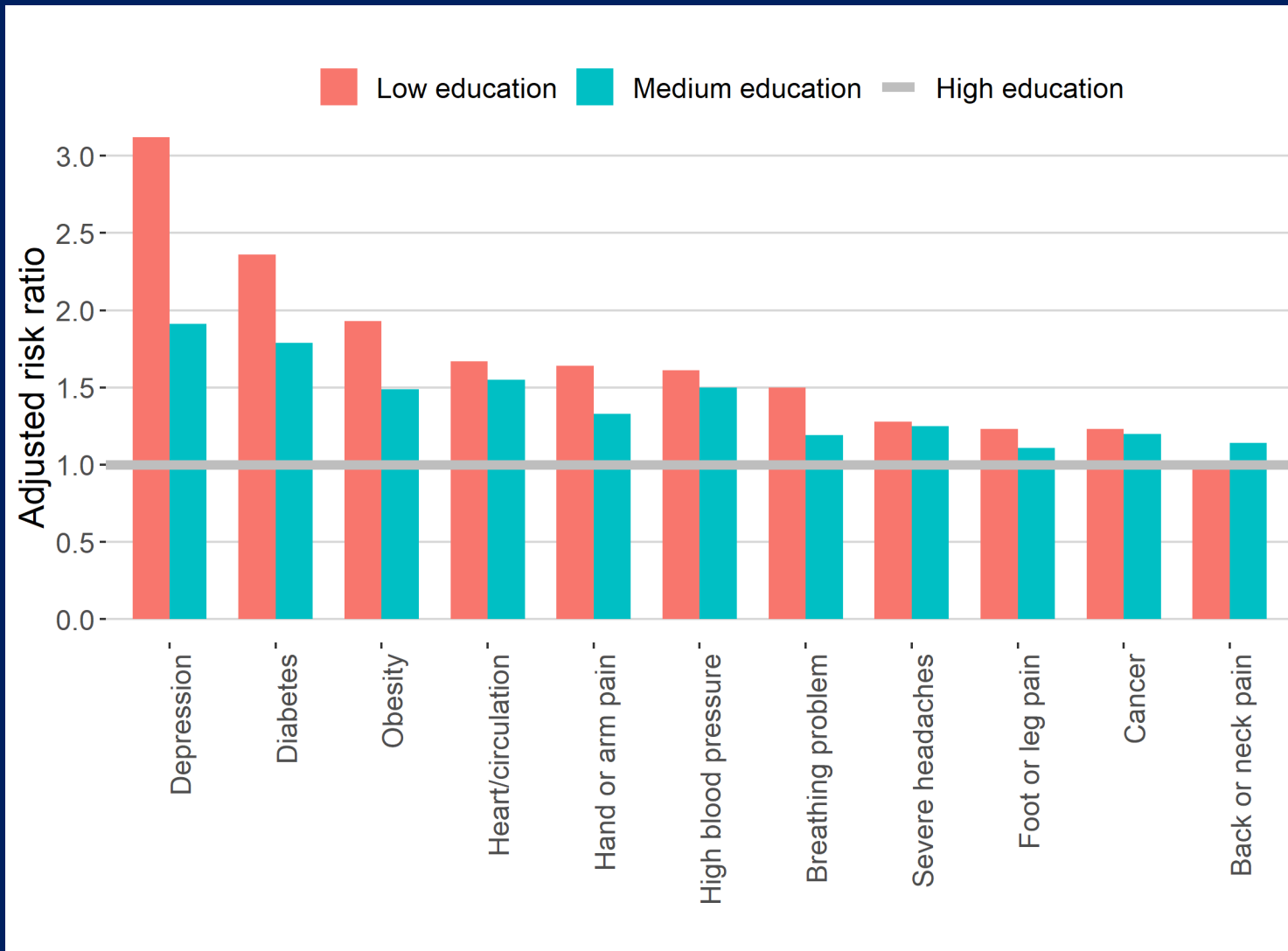
Social gradients in health



Social gradients in health



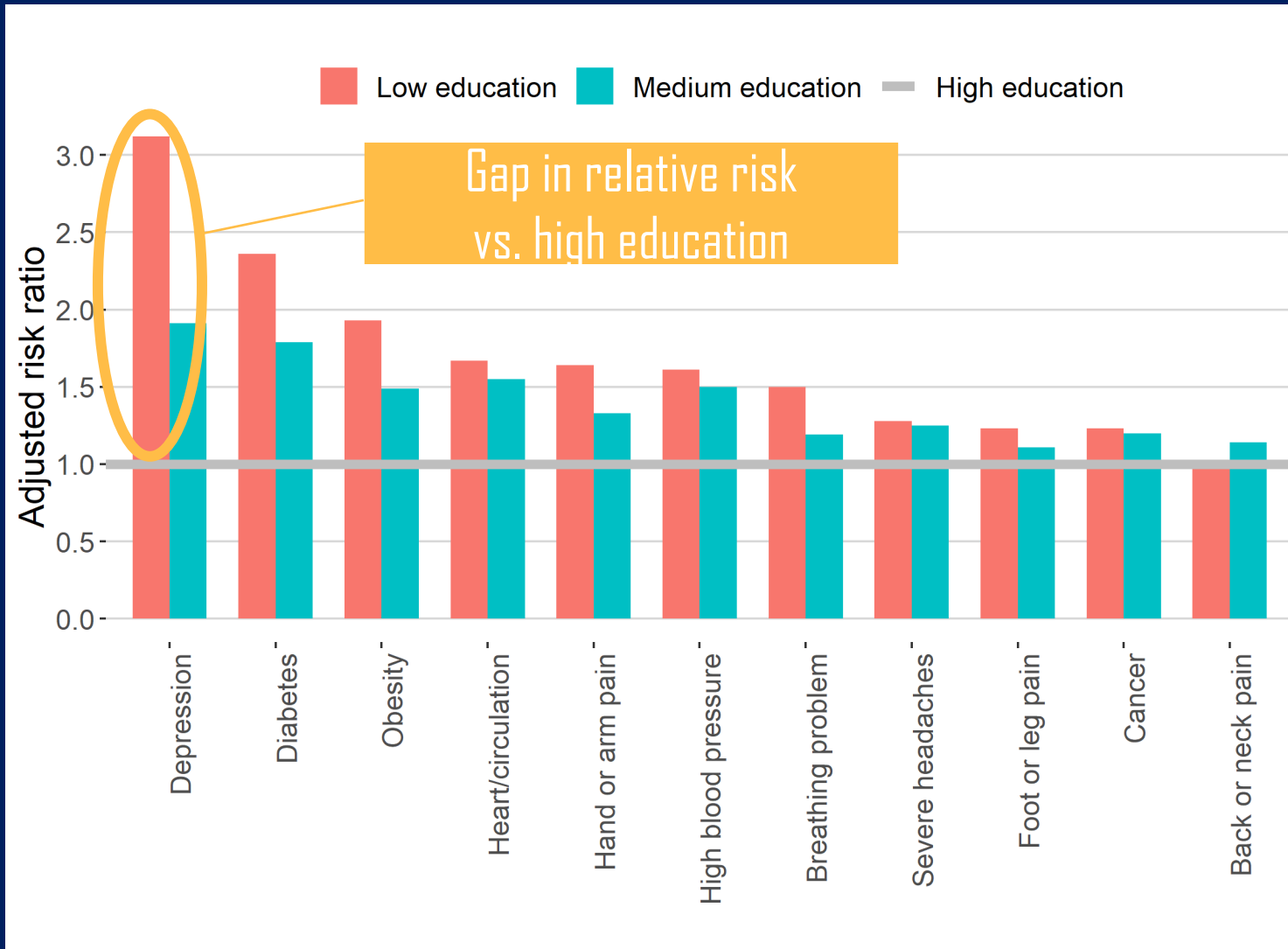
Non-communicable diseases in Europe



Note: Data refer to 2014.

Source: Authors, based on data by McNamara et al. (2017) from the European Social Survey 2014.

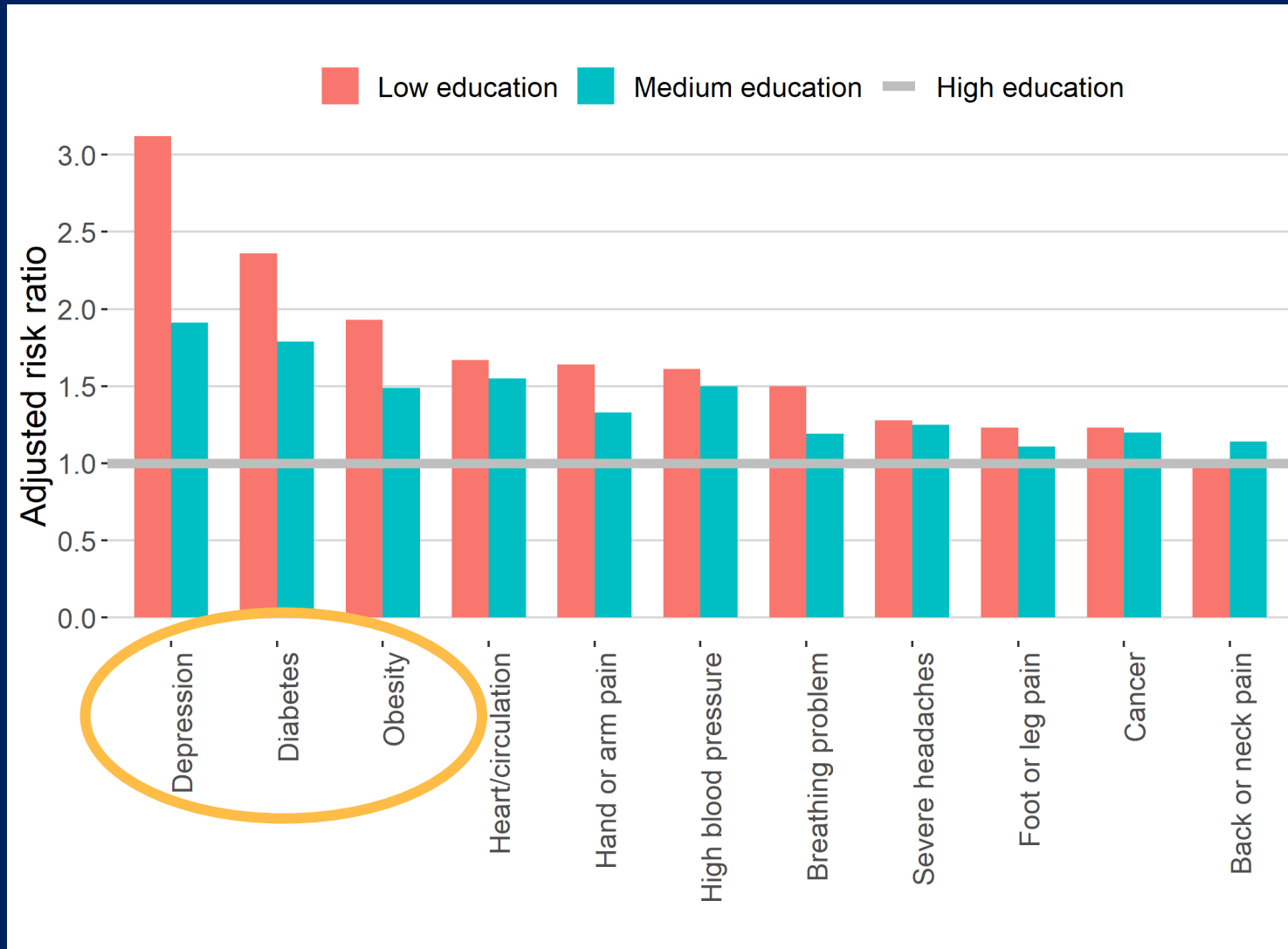
Non-communicable diseases in Europe



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Non-communicable diseases in Europe

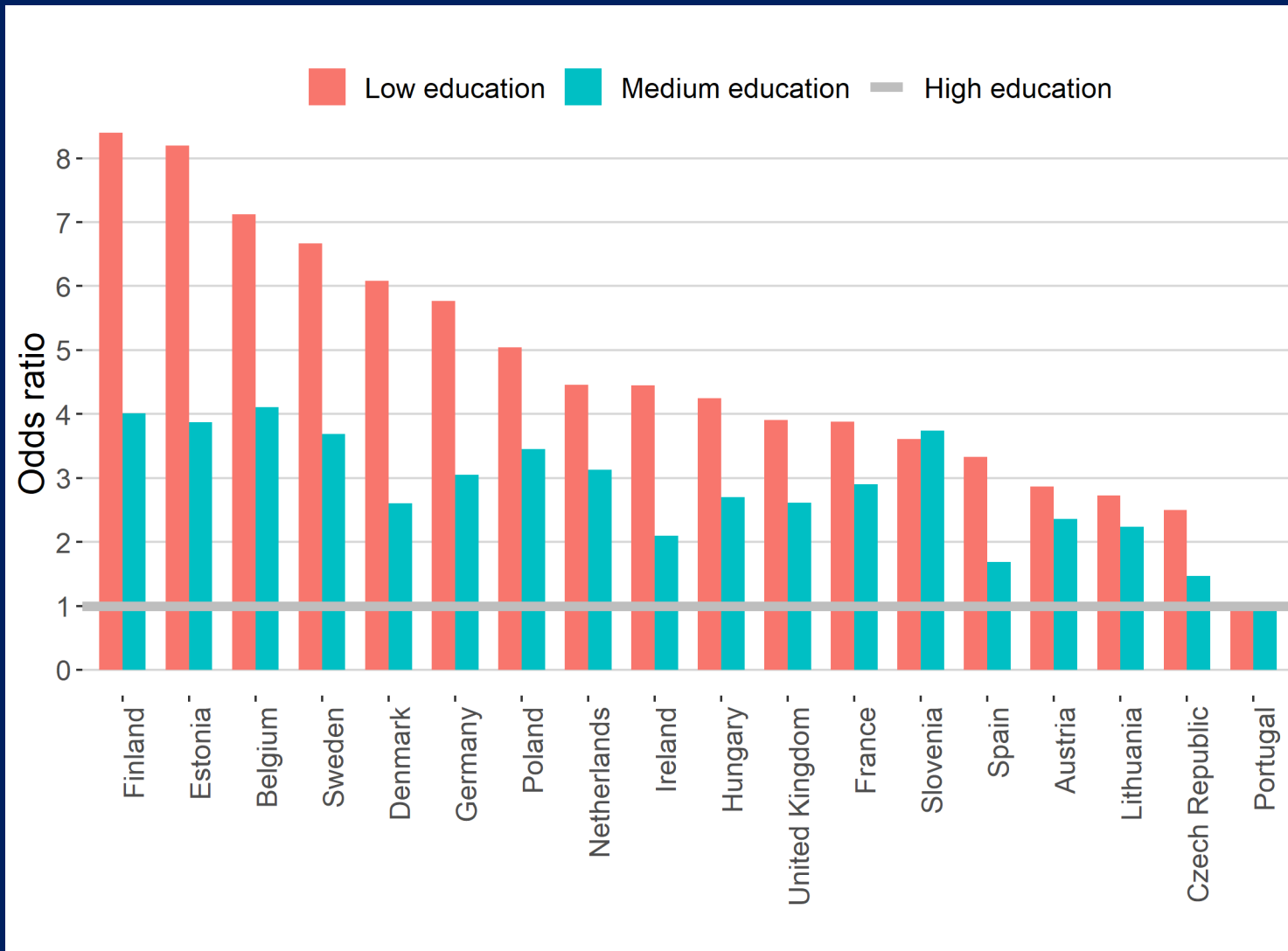


Someone with low educ is 3x more likely than someone with university educ to report depression

Note: Data refer to 2014.

Source: Authors, based on data by McNamara et al. (2017) from the European Social Survey 2014.

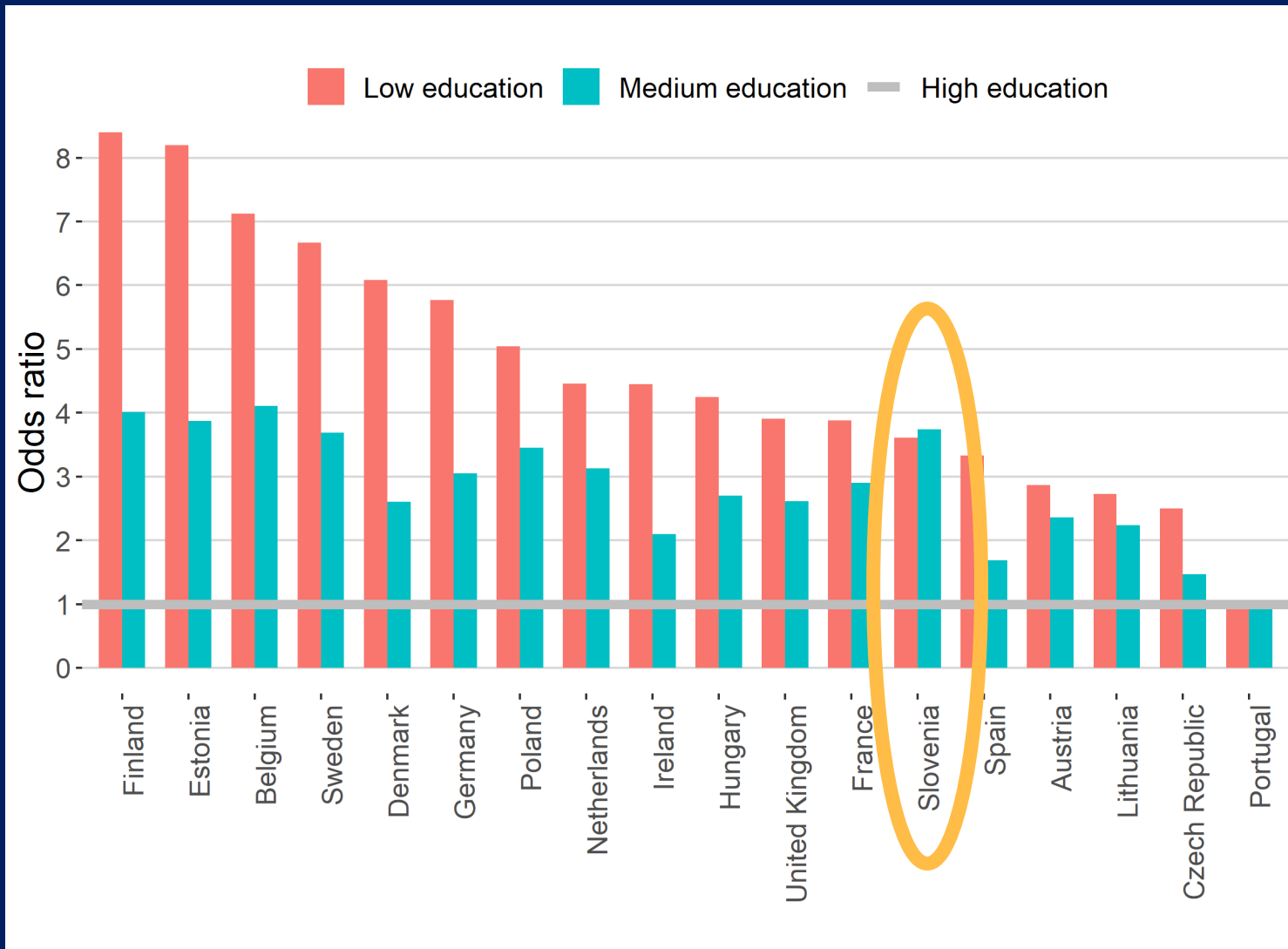
Risk of being a daily smoker



Note: Data refer to 2014.

Source: Authors, based on data by Huijts et al. (2017) from the European Social Survey 2014.

Risk of being a daily smoker

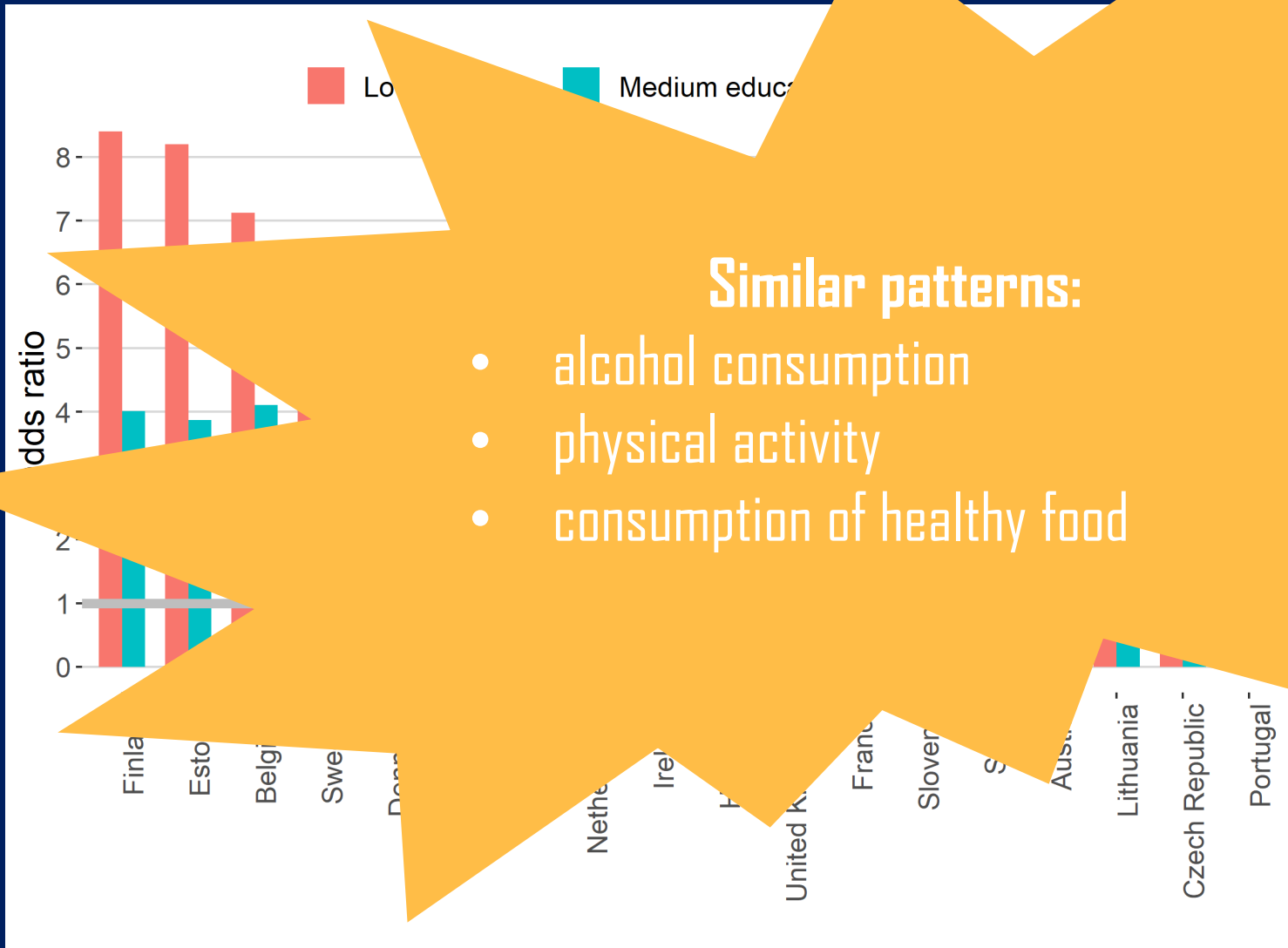


Slovenia: Individuals w/low-middle educ 3.5x more likely to smoke (vs. individuals w/high educ)

Note: Data refer to 2014.

Source: Authors, based on data by Huijts et al. (2017) from the European Social Survey 2014.

Risk of being a daily smoker



Similar patterns:

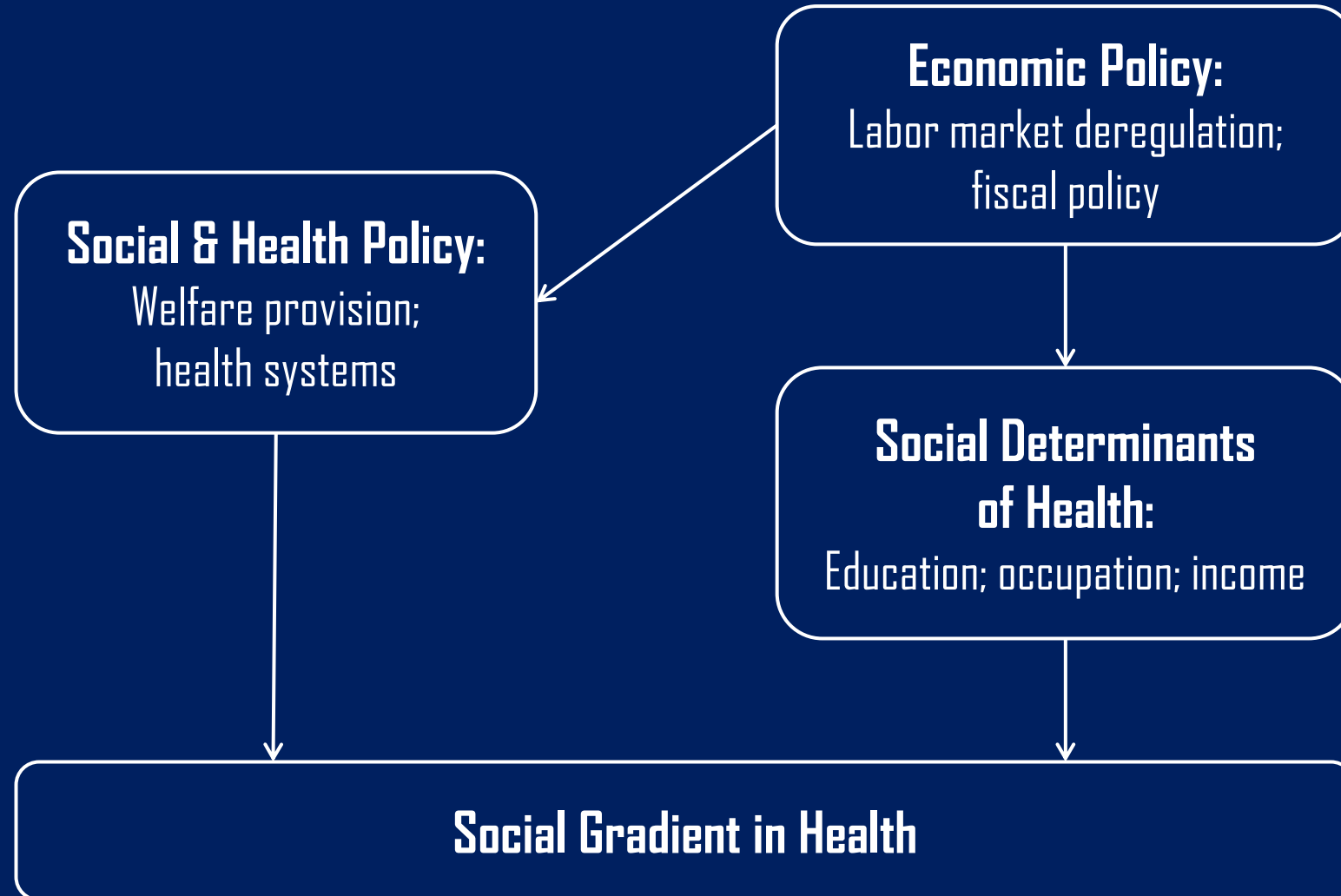
- alcohol consumption
- physical activity
- consumption of healthy food

Note: Data refer to 2014.

Source: Authors, based on data by Huijts et al. (2017) from the European Social Survey 2014.

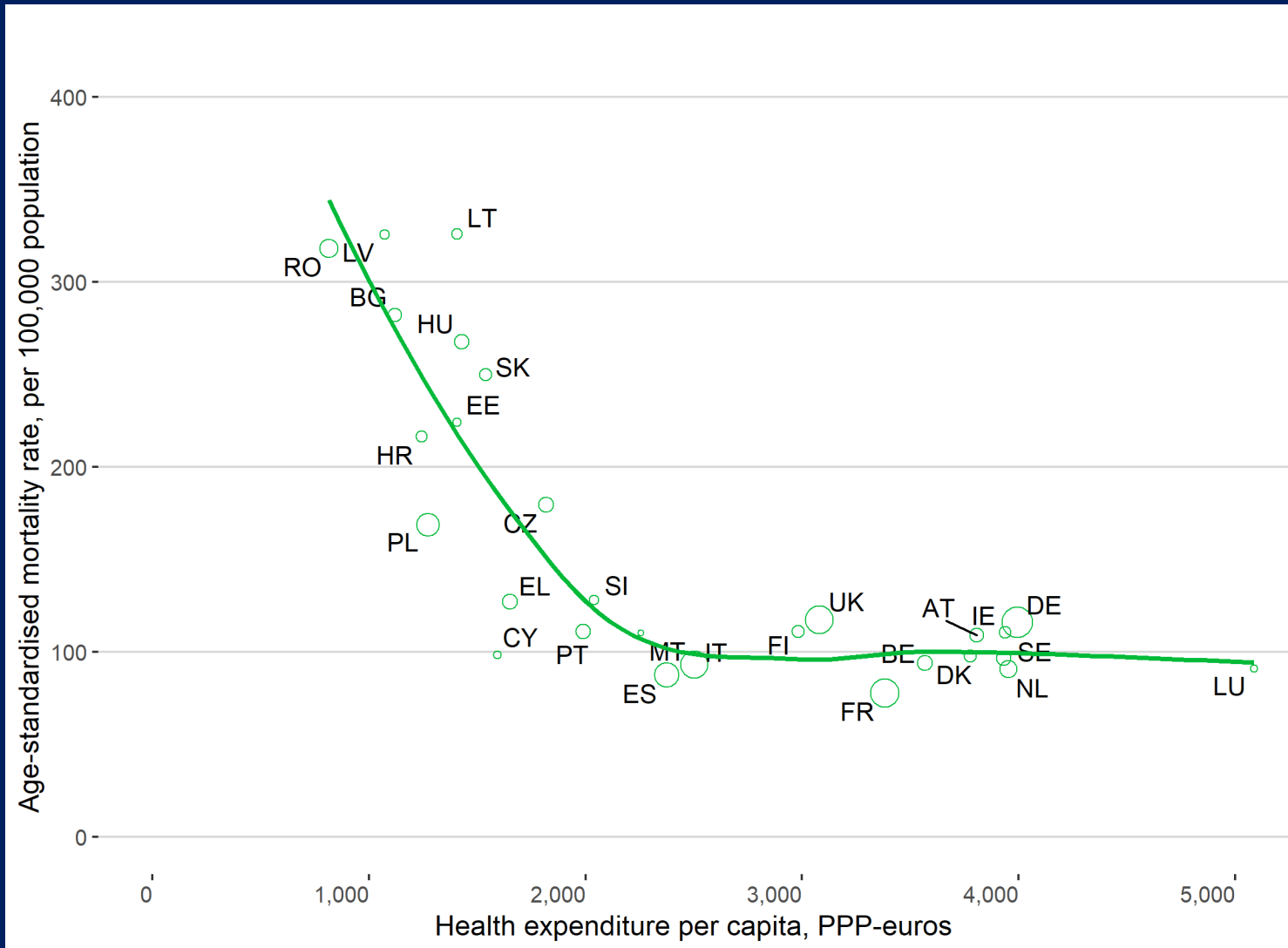
What determines
health inequalities?

Institutions matter!



1. The role of health systems

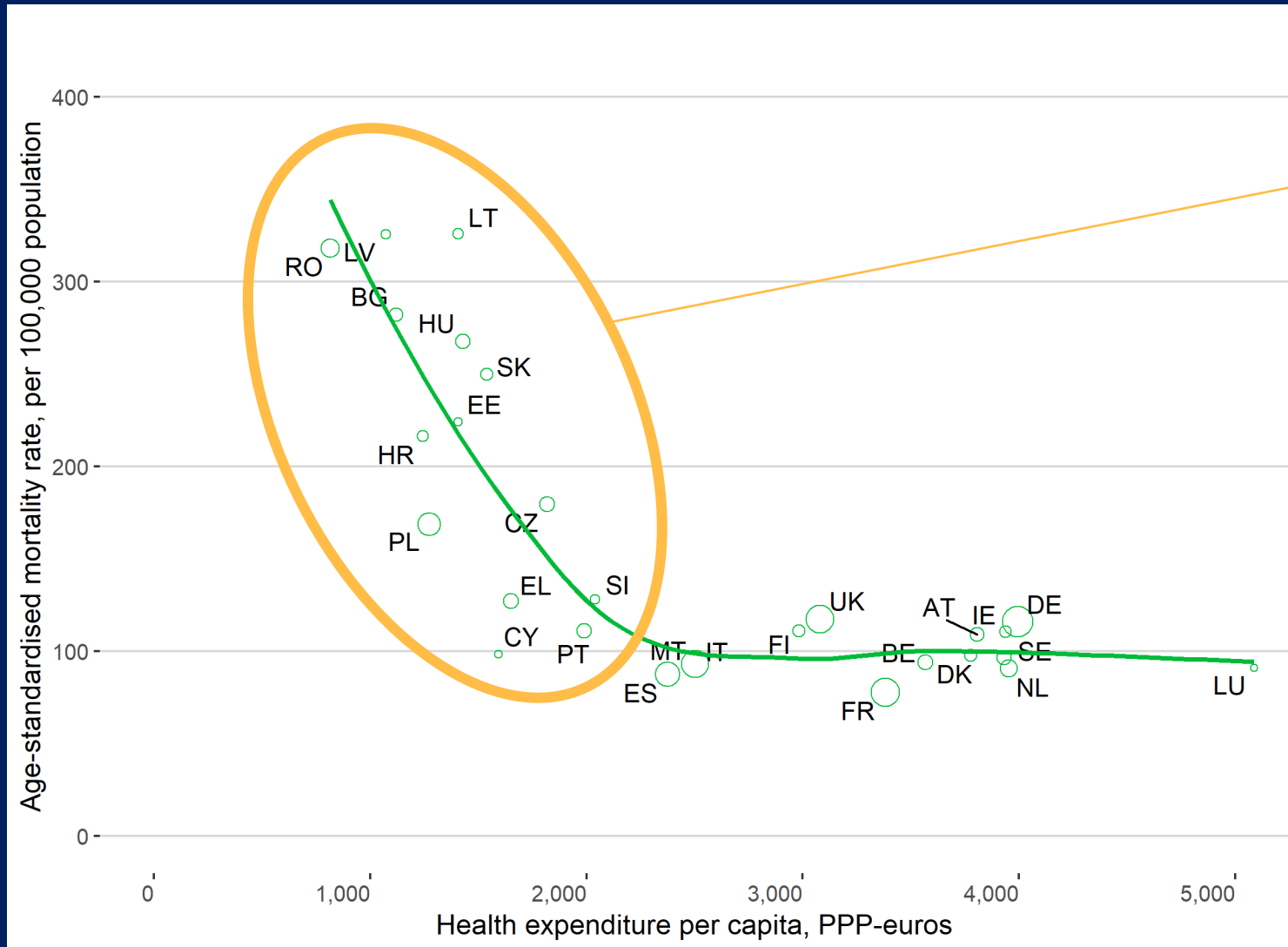
The role of health systems: *preventable deaths*



Note: Data refer to 2015. Observations are weighted by the relative population size, indicated by circle size.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018), OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems & Policies (2017).

The role of health systems: *preventable deaths*



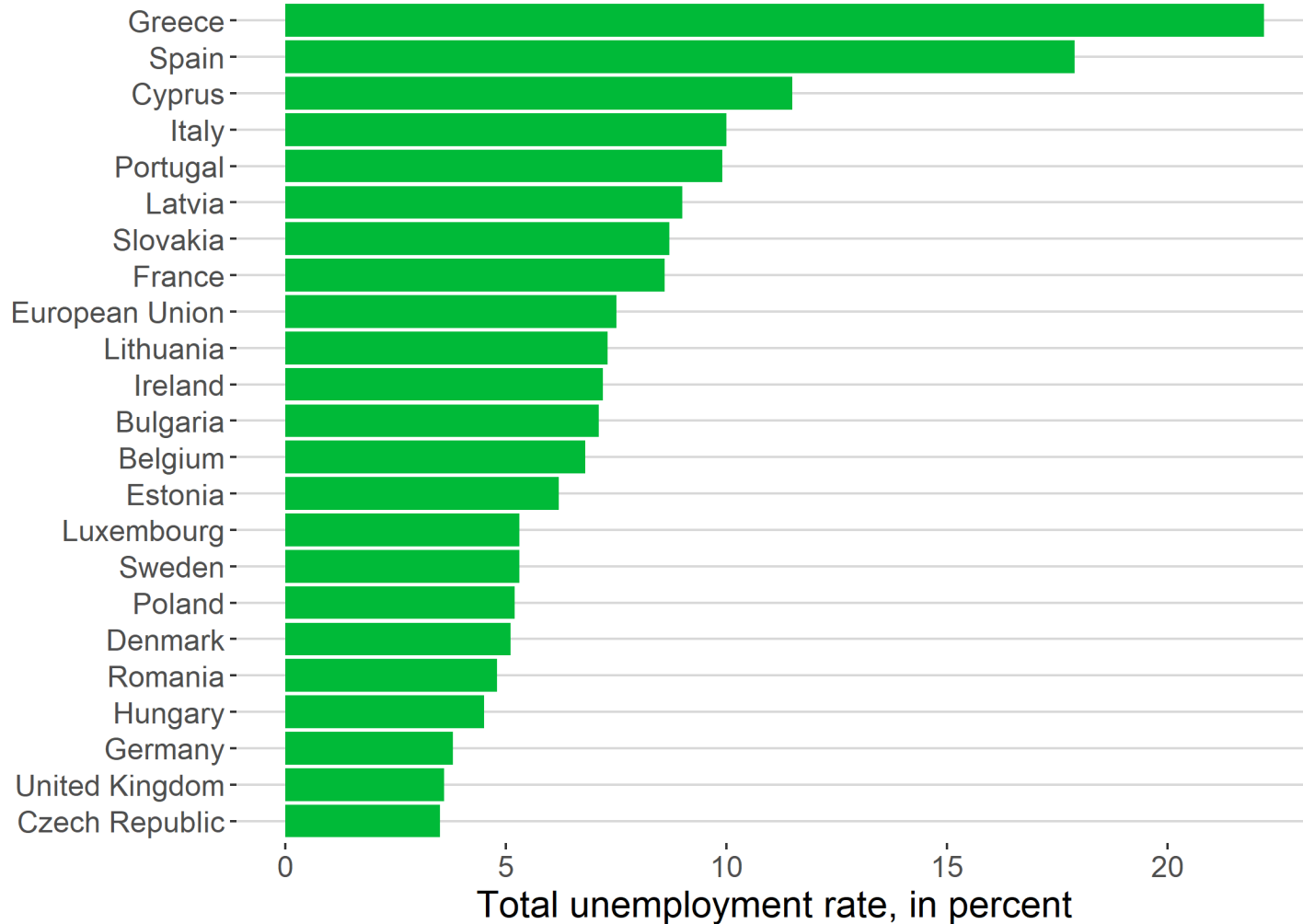
Amenable mortality above the EU average → increasing health spending can lead to better outcomes

Note: Data refer to 2015. Observations are weighted by the relative population size, indicated by circle size.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018), OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems & Policies (2017).

2. The role of economic policies

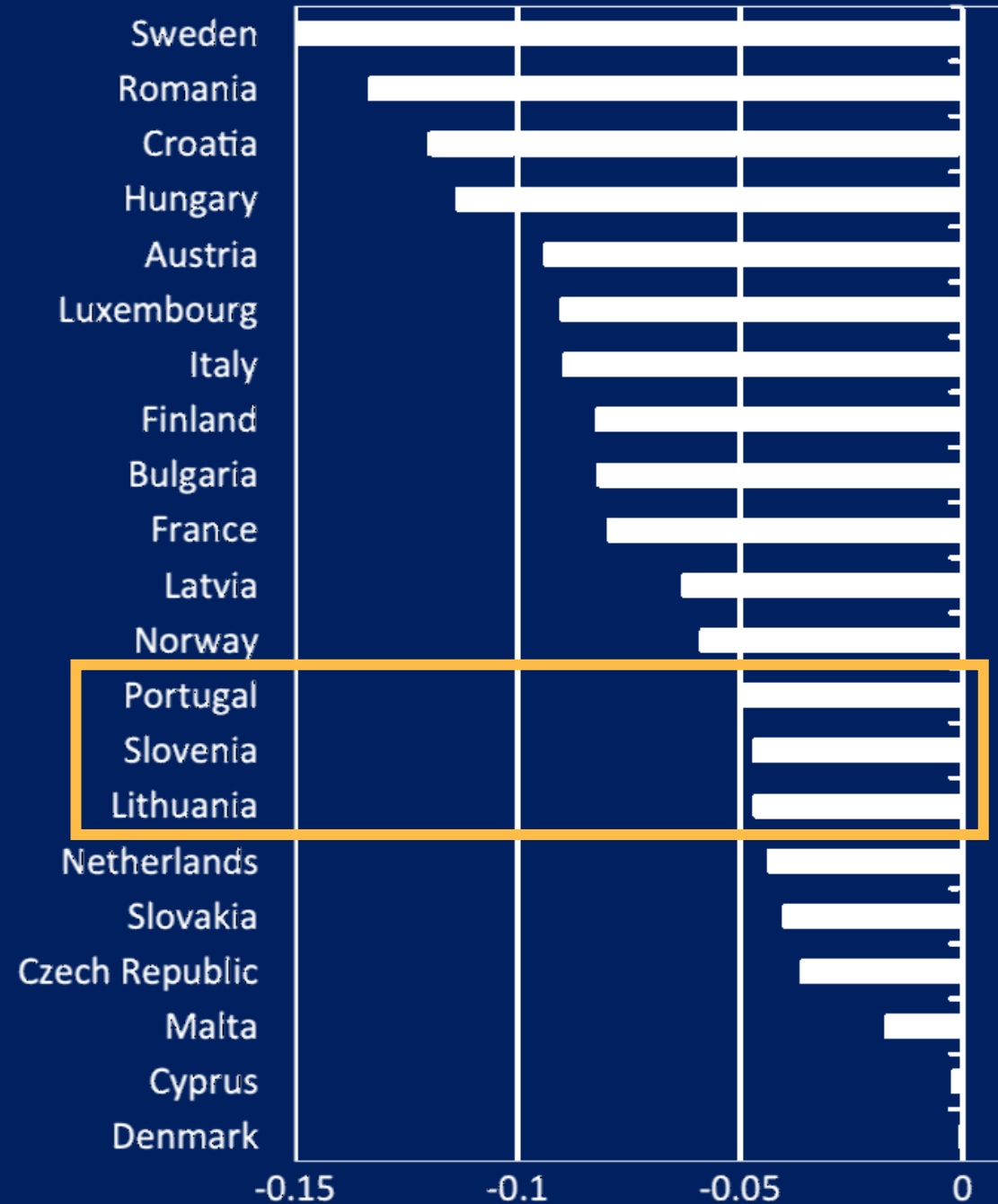
The role of economic policies



Note: Total unemployment rate is the annual average as a share of the active population, from 25 to 74 years. Data refer to 2016.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018).

Transition to unemployment & health

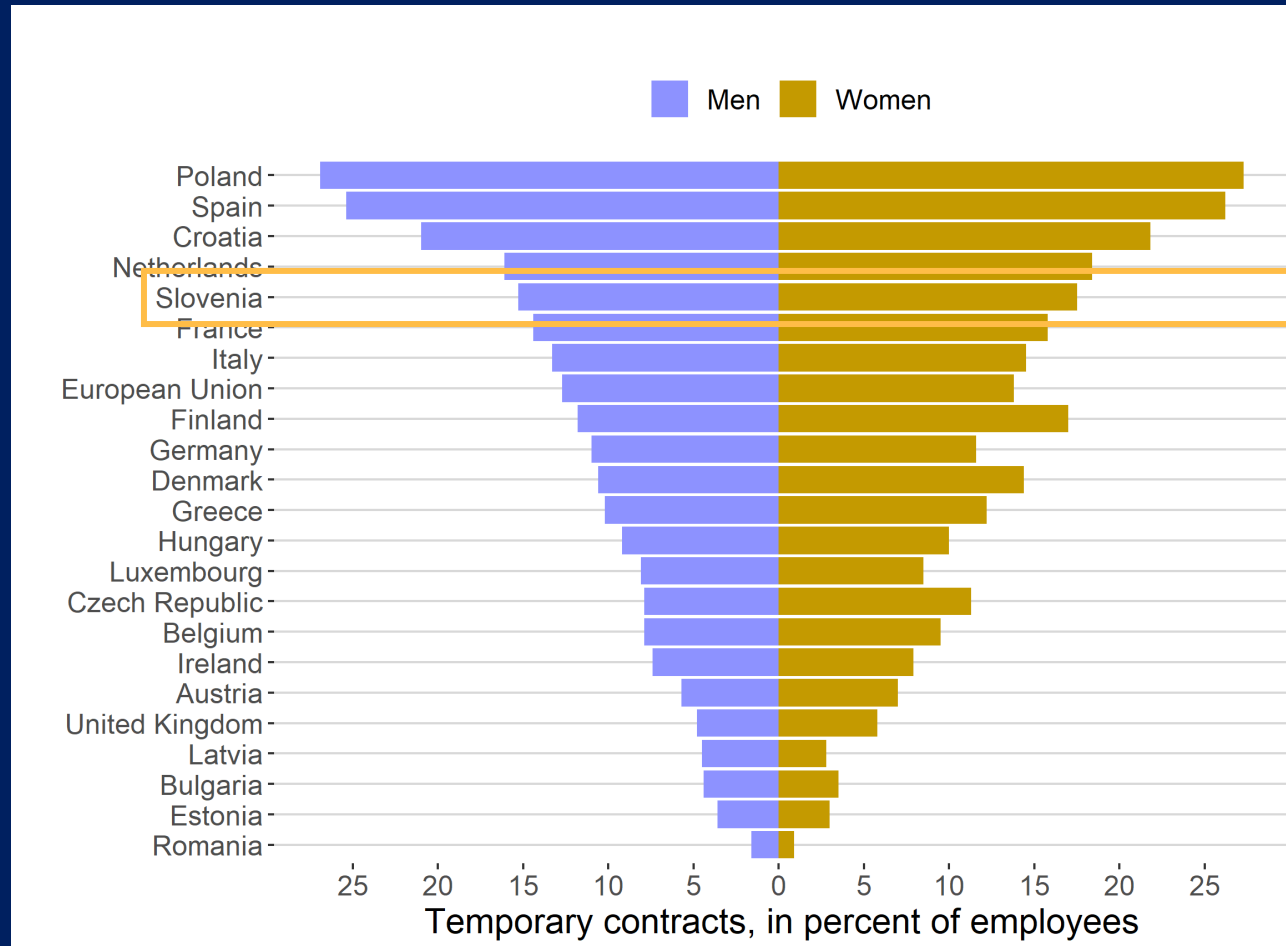


Data: Self-reported health.

Source: Tøge et al. (2015).

3. The role of the social determinants of health

The role of social determinants of health



Good work

- ✓ Higher wages
- ✓ Self-worth
- ✓ Social networks

Precarious Employment

- ✗ Stress and Insecurity
- ✗ Long working hours
- ✗ Lower wages

Note: Percentage of employees aged 20 to 64. Data refer to 2016.

Source: Authors, based on data by Eurostat (2018)

What is the impact of
health inequalities?

The cost of health inequalities

- **Good health empowers individuals:** enables better, informed choices regarding lifestyle & health service access/utilisation
- Ill-health has adverse effects on
 - a) Well-being (e.g., employment opportunities, status, social connectedness)
 - b) Families and communities (e.g., social connectedness)
 - c) Welfare costs (e.g., cost of health services)
 - d) Economic costs (e.g., due to absenteeism, unemployment & lower productivity)

Has the pandemic made things worse?

COVID-19 and health inequalities

- Features of the pandemic ...
 - a) Virus-related infection and mortality: Different exposure to risk and vulnerability
 - b) Health costs: reduced access to healthcare services for non-COVID-reasons

COVID-19 and health inequalities

- Features of the pandemic ...
 - a) Virus-related infection and mortality: Different exposure to risk and vulnerability
 - b) Health costs: reduced access to healthcare services for non-COVID-reasons
- ... and policy responses
 - c) Lockdown: Increase in social isolation
 - d) **Short and long-term effects** through economic pathways (e.g., job loss or austerity)

A progressive agenda for action



Thank you!

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Think-tank for action on social change



Health Inequalities in Europe:

Setting the Stage for
Progressive Policy Action