



The unequal health of Europeans: successes and failures of policies

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Acknowledgements

Prof. Johan Mackenbach, Prof. Martin McKee

Health in Europe 1

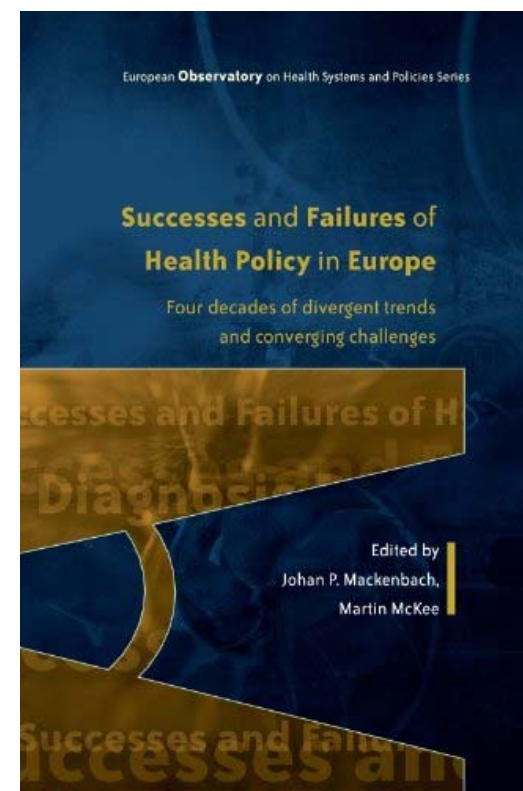
The unequal health of Europeans: successes and failures of policies

Johan P Mackenbach, Marina Karanikolos, Martin McKee

Europe, with its 53 countries and divided history, is a remarkable but inadequately exploited natural laboratory for studies of the effects of health policy. In this paper, the first in a Series about health in Europe, we review developments in population health in Europe, with a focus on trends in mortality, and draw attention to the main successes and failures of health policy in the past four decades. In western Europe, life expectancy has improved almost continuously, but progress has been erratic in eastern Europe, and, as a result, disparities in male life expectancy between the two areas are greater now than they were four decades ago. The falls in mortality noted in western Europe are associated with many different causes of death and show the combined effects of economic growth, improved health care, and successful health policies (eg, tobacco control, road traffic safety). Less favourable mortality trends in eastern Europe show economic and health-care problems and a failure to implement effective health policies. The political history of Europe has left deep divisions in the health of the population. Important health challenges remain in both western and eastern Europe and signify unresolved issues in health policy (eg, alcohol, food) and rising health inequalities within countries.

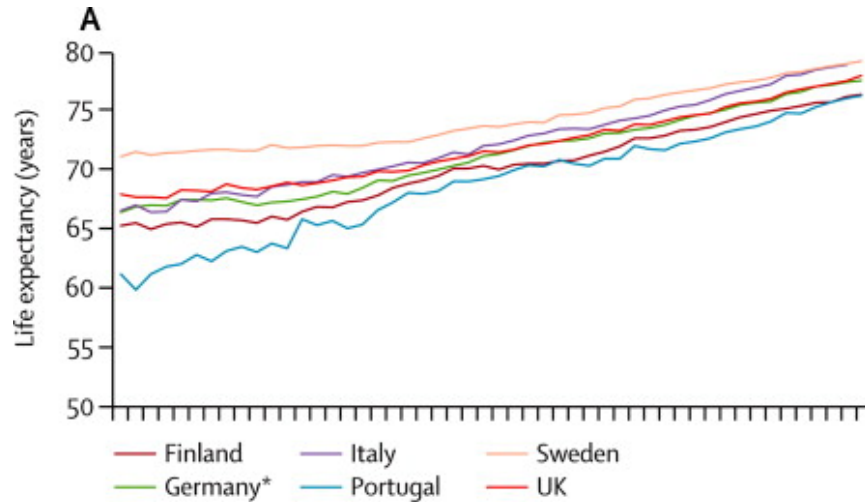


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This is the first in a Series of seven papers about health in Europe
Department of Public Health, Erasmus MC, University Medical Center Rotterdam, Rotterdam, Netherlands (Prof J P Mackenbach PhD); and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies

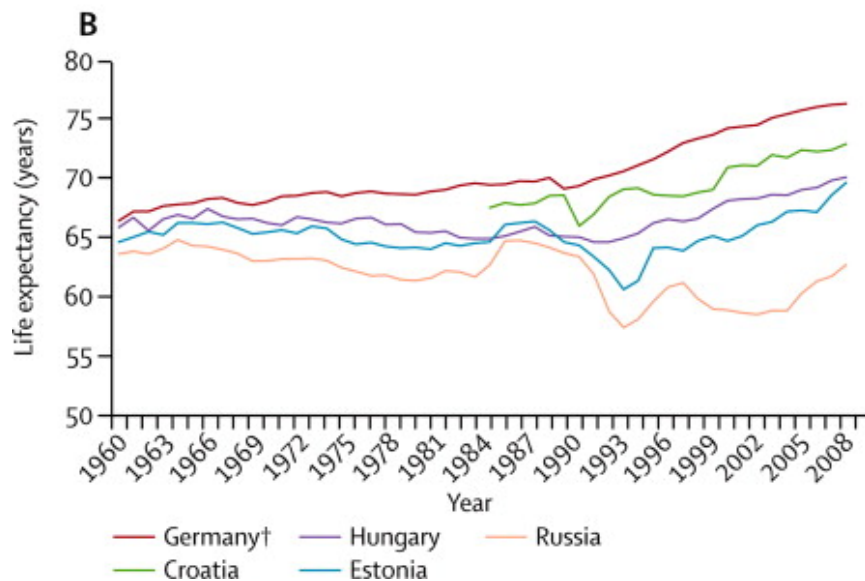




Unequal health of Europeans



Convergence?



Divergence?



Why unequal?

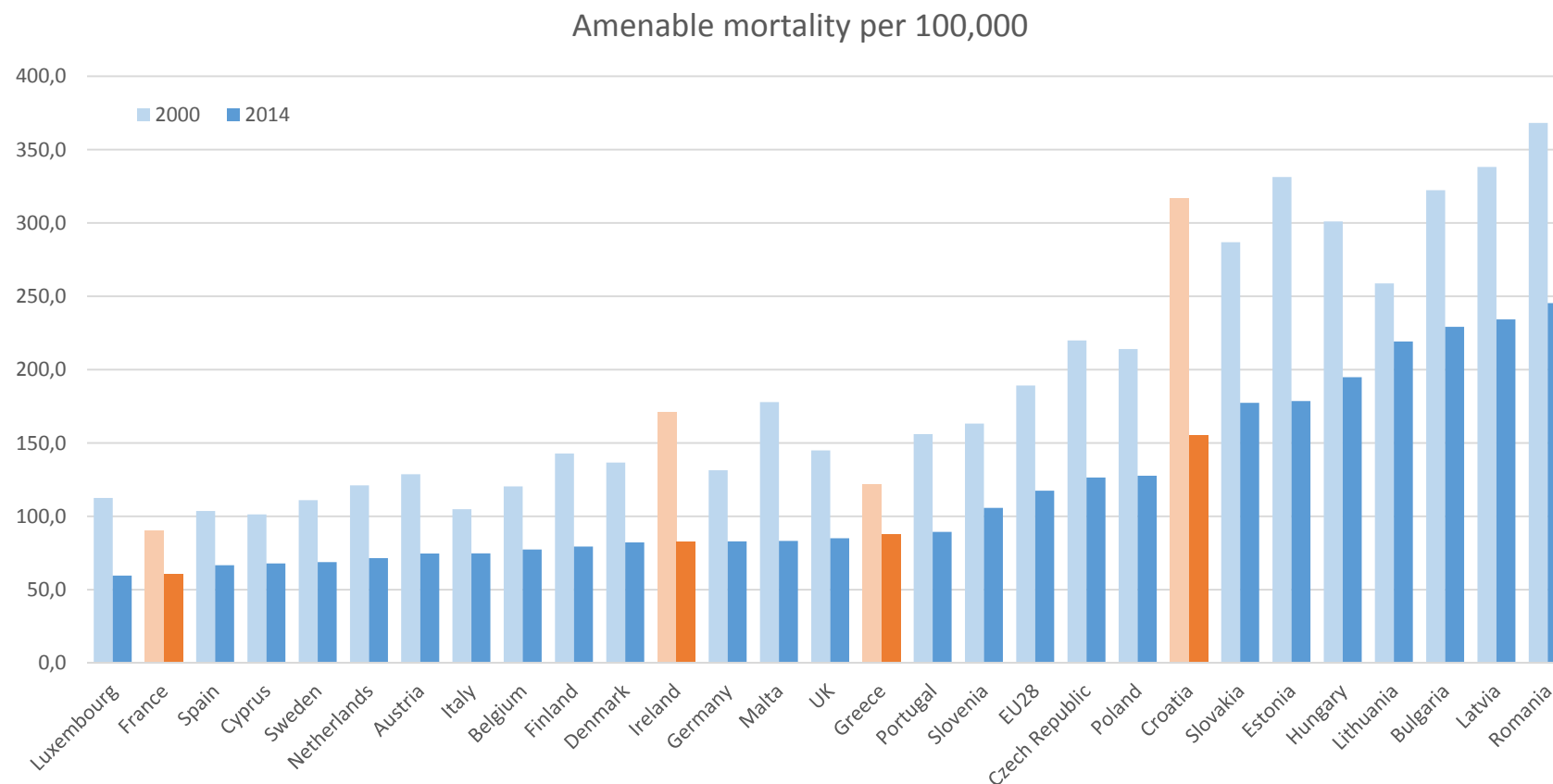
- Healthcare sector
- Intersectoral policies and public health
- Fiscal policies and living conditions



HEALTHCARE POLICIES



Amenable mortality (EU28, 2014)

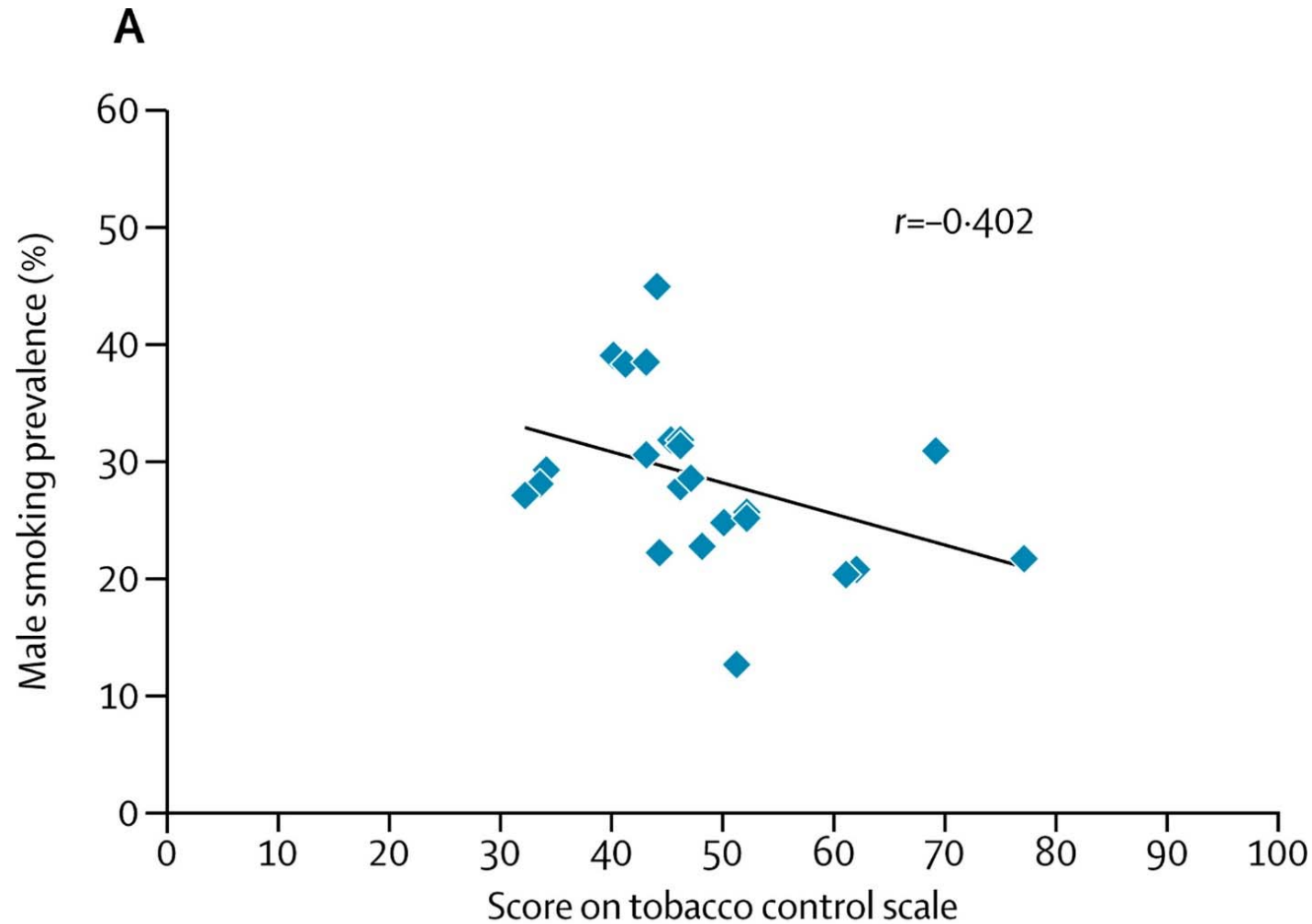




PUBLIC HEALTH & INTERSECTORAL POLICIES



Tobacco control





Tobacco control

Table 4. 35 European countries ranked by total TCS score in 2016

Ranking 2016 (ranking 2013)		Country	Price (30)	Public place bans (22)	Public info campaign spending (15)	Advertising bans (13)	Health warnings (10)	Treatment (10)	Total (100)
1 (1)	–	UK	26	22	3	12	9	9	81
2 (2)	–	Ireland	20	22	2	13	5	8	70
3 (3)	–	Iceland	20	17	13	13	4	2	69
4 (5)	▲	France	19	18	1	11	9	6	64
5 (4)	▼	Norway	20	17	3	13	4	6	63
6 (9)	▲	Finland	16	18	3	13	5	5	60
7 (19)	▲	Romania	17	19		8	5	7	56
8 (7)	▼	Spain	14	21	1	9	4	6	55
9 (11)	▲	Hungary	15	17		11	5	5	53
9 (13)	▲	Netherlands	14	15	3	9	5	7	53
9 (5)	▼	Turkey	17	19		7	5	5	53
9 (11)	▲	Sweden	14	15	1	11	5	7	53
13 (7)	▼	Malta	17	12	1	11	5	5	51
13 (15)	▲	Italy	15	14	2	9	5	6	51
15 (20)	▲	Poland	14	11	1	11	5	8	50
15 (24)	▲	Portugal	17	11	1	10	5	6	50
17 (13)	▼	Belgium	14	15	1	8	5	6	49
17 (10)	▼	Ukraine	11	19		13	4	2	49
17 (new)		Russian Fed.	6	19		13	4	7	49
20 (15)	▼	Bulgaria	16	11		11	5	4	47
21 (18)	▼	Switzerland	13	11	8	2	5	7	46
21 (20)	▼	Estonia	12	12		11	5	6	46
23 (15)	▼	Denmark	13	11	1	8	5	7	45
23 (23)	–	Serbia	21	11		9	1	3	45
23 (26)	▲	Croatia	16	11	1	12	1	4	45
26 (32)	▼	Cyprus	16	8		11	1	8	44
26 (24)	▼	Latvia	14	12		9	5	4	44
28 (20)	▼	Slovenia	13	15		9	1	5	43
28 (29)	▲	Lithuania	12	13	1	8	5	4	43
30 (27)	▼	Slovakia	11	10		9	5	6	41
31 (31)	–	Czech Rep.	14	9		8	5	4	40
31 (29)	▼	Greece	16	7		6	5	6	40
33 (28)	▼	Lux.	5	15		9	1	7	37
33 (33)	–	Germany	13	11		4	5	4	37
35 (34)	▼	Austria	11	8		7	5	5	36

UK vs Greece, 2016:

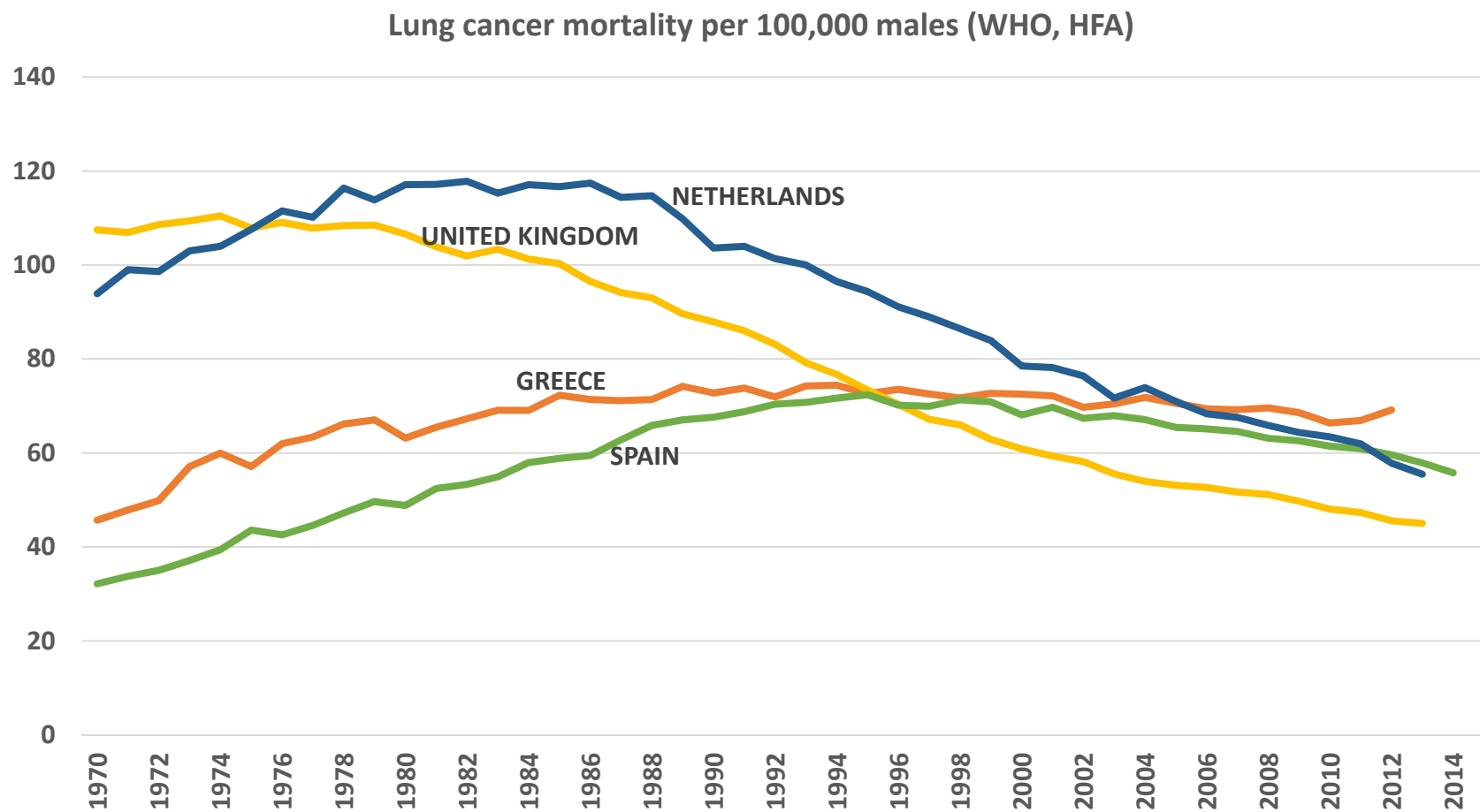
Much higher price, effective bans in public places and on advertising, health warnings and treatment.

- **31. Greece (29 ▼ 2).** Compliance with the smoke free legislation is worrying. Greece raised taxes in very difficult economic times.
- **23. Croatia (26 ▲ 3).** Croatia should be able to improve its tobacco control score in the coming years.
- **9. Netherlands (13 ▲ 4).** Introduced a smoking ban in small bars in 2015 and will introduce a display ban in 2017.
- **8. Spain (7 ▼ 1).** Spain has ratified the WHO FCTC Illicit Trade Protocol, but has not undertaken any new initiatives since 2010.
- **1. UK (1 --).** The UK is the second country in the world to adopt plain packaging legislation, banned smoking in cars when minors are present.

Joossens & Raw (2017) Tobacco Control Scale 2016 in Europe.



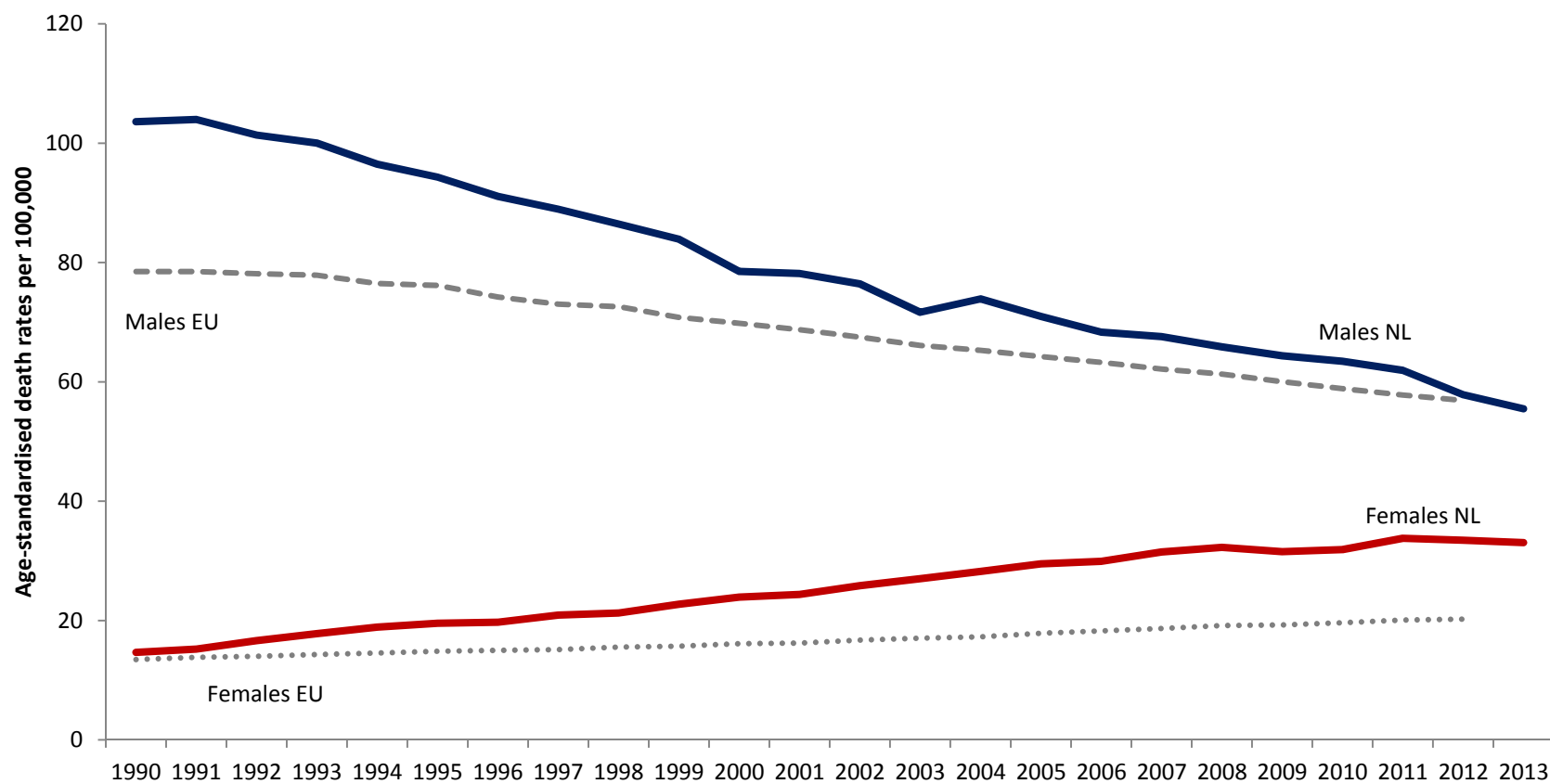
Lung cancer deaths





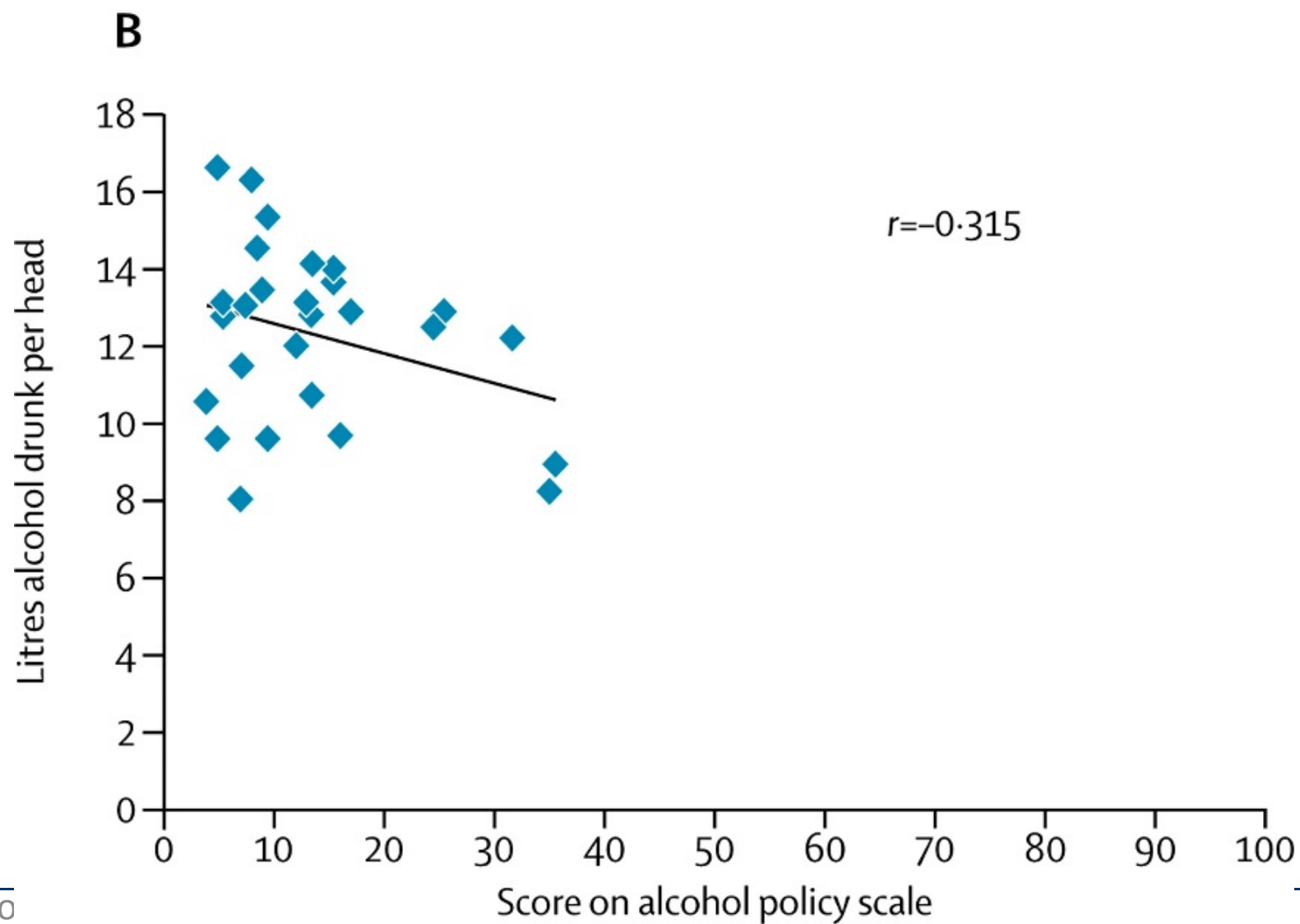
Lung cancer deaths

Mortality from lung cancer, EU and the Netherlands (WHO, HFA)





Alcohol control

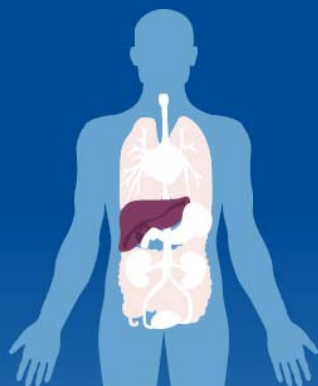




Alcohol control

THE LANCET Commission

UK LIVER DISEASE CRISIS



What have the UK's European neighbours done?

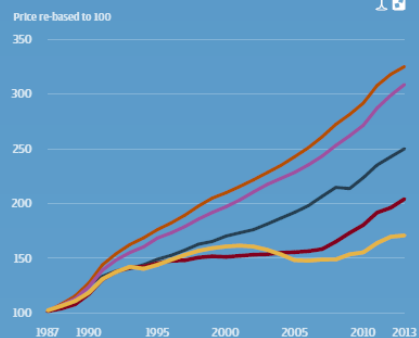
France and Italy have seen a **dramatic reduction in liver mortality** whereas the UK and Finland have seen liver deaths rise **more than fivefold**¹.

What's driving this?

1 The UK population changed their drinking habits reflecting the **affordability of stronger alcohol at home...**

...and the number of people admitted to hospital for alcohol-related liver disease has almost doubled in a decade...

PRICE OF BEER, WINE & SPIRITS VERSUS INFLATION²



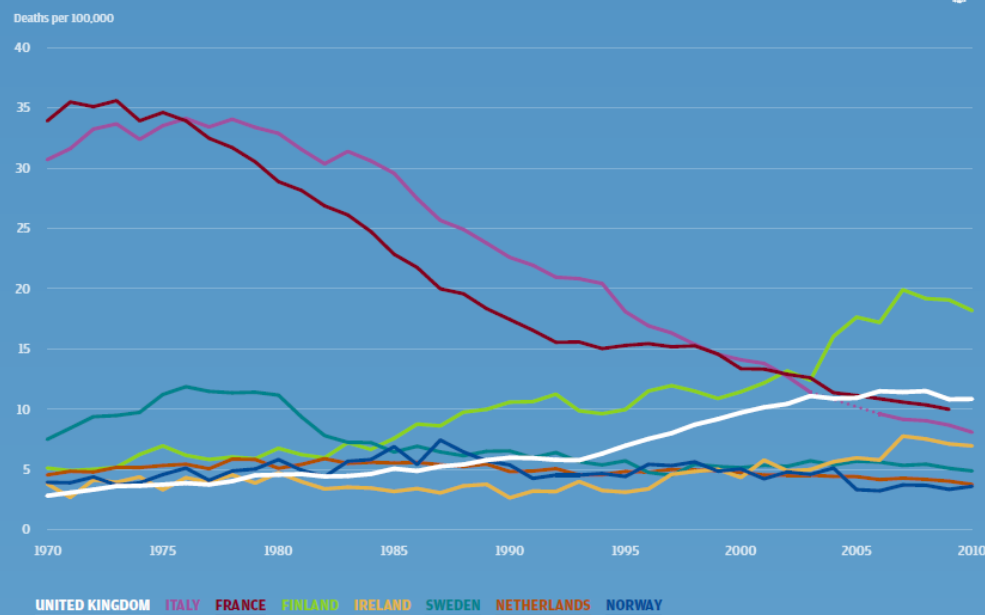
ALL ITEMS BEER ON SALES* WINE & SPIRITS ON SALES*
 WINE & SPIRITS OFF SALES* BEER OFF SALES*

* On-sales means in pubs and restaurants, off-sales means liquor stores and supermarkets.

ALCOHOL-RELATED HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS³



PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN STANDARDISED DEATH RATES¹



A steady fall in cirrhosis deaths in France over the last 30 years corresponds to a proportionate **fall in alcohol consumption** over the period⁷.

Conversely, a 33% reduction in Finnish alcohol taxation in 2004 resulted in soaring rates of liver disease⁸.

2 Of the 25% of the UK population with obesity, a vast majority has **non-alcohol related fatty liver disease**¹.

3 Annual deaths related to **hepatitis C** have quadrupled since 1996. It is estimated that around 75% of infected cases are unknown⁴.



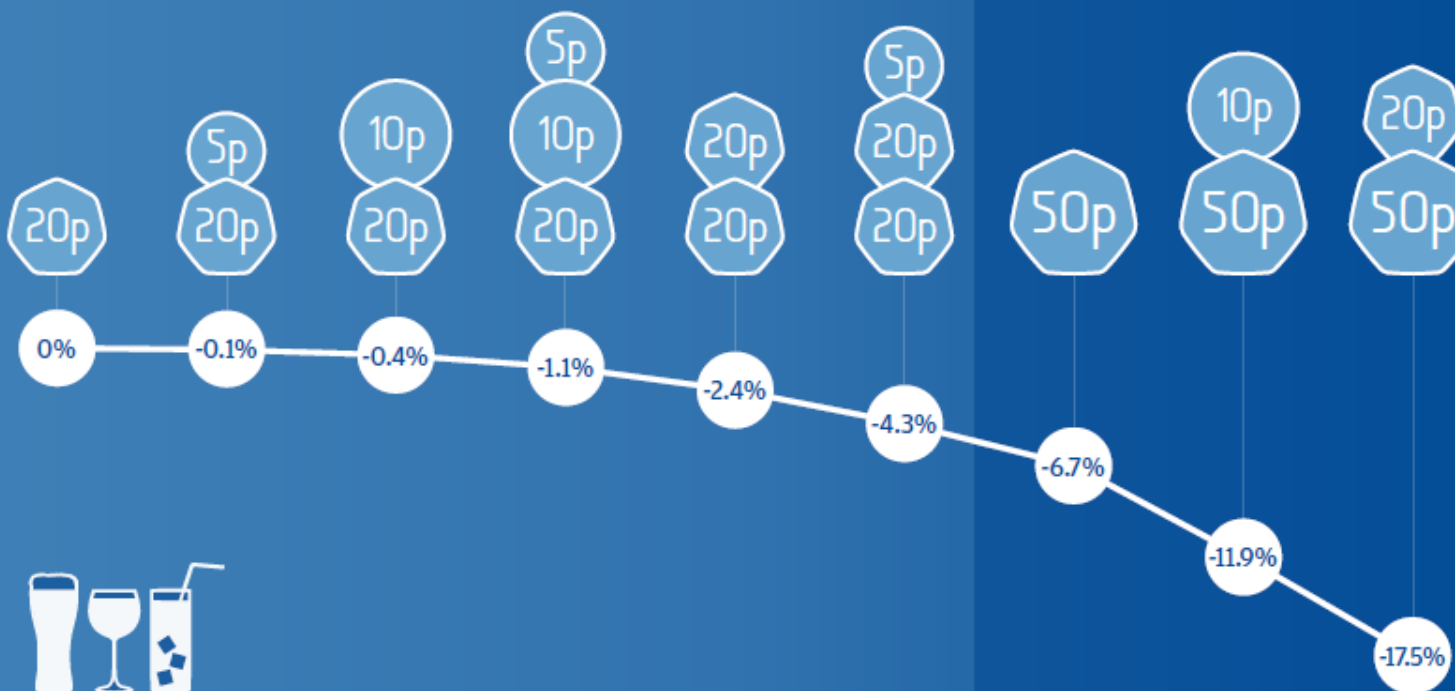
Alcohol control policies

So what changes do we need to make in the UK?

POLICY MAKERS

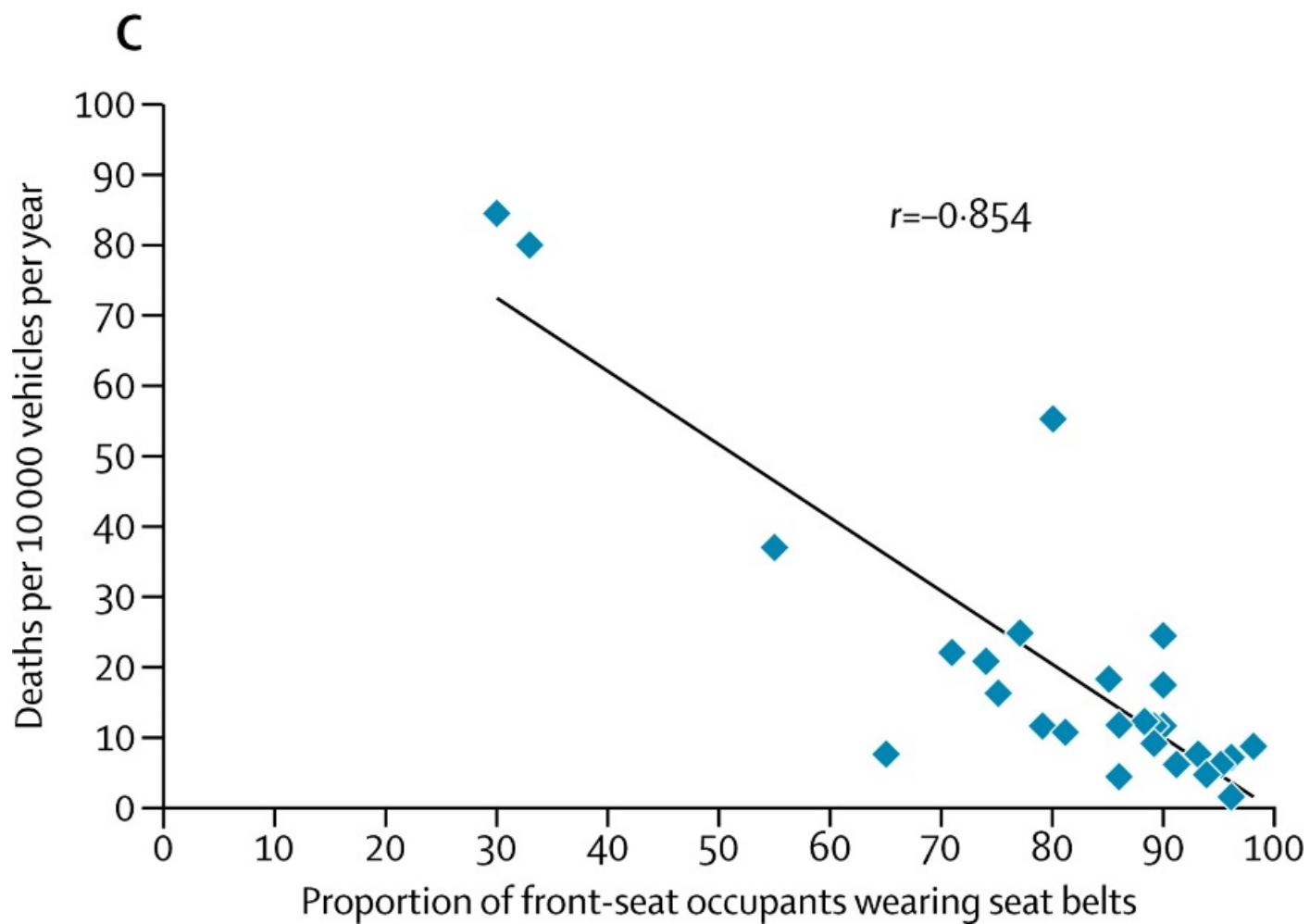
Introduce a **minimum price of 50p** to reduce alcohol consumption.

PROJECTED MINIMUM PRICE PER UNIT OF ALCOHOL AND RESULTING PERCENTAGE DECREASE IN CONSUMPTION⁵





Traffic safety





Traffic safety

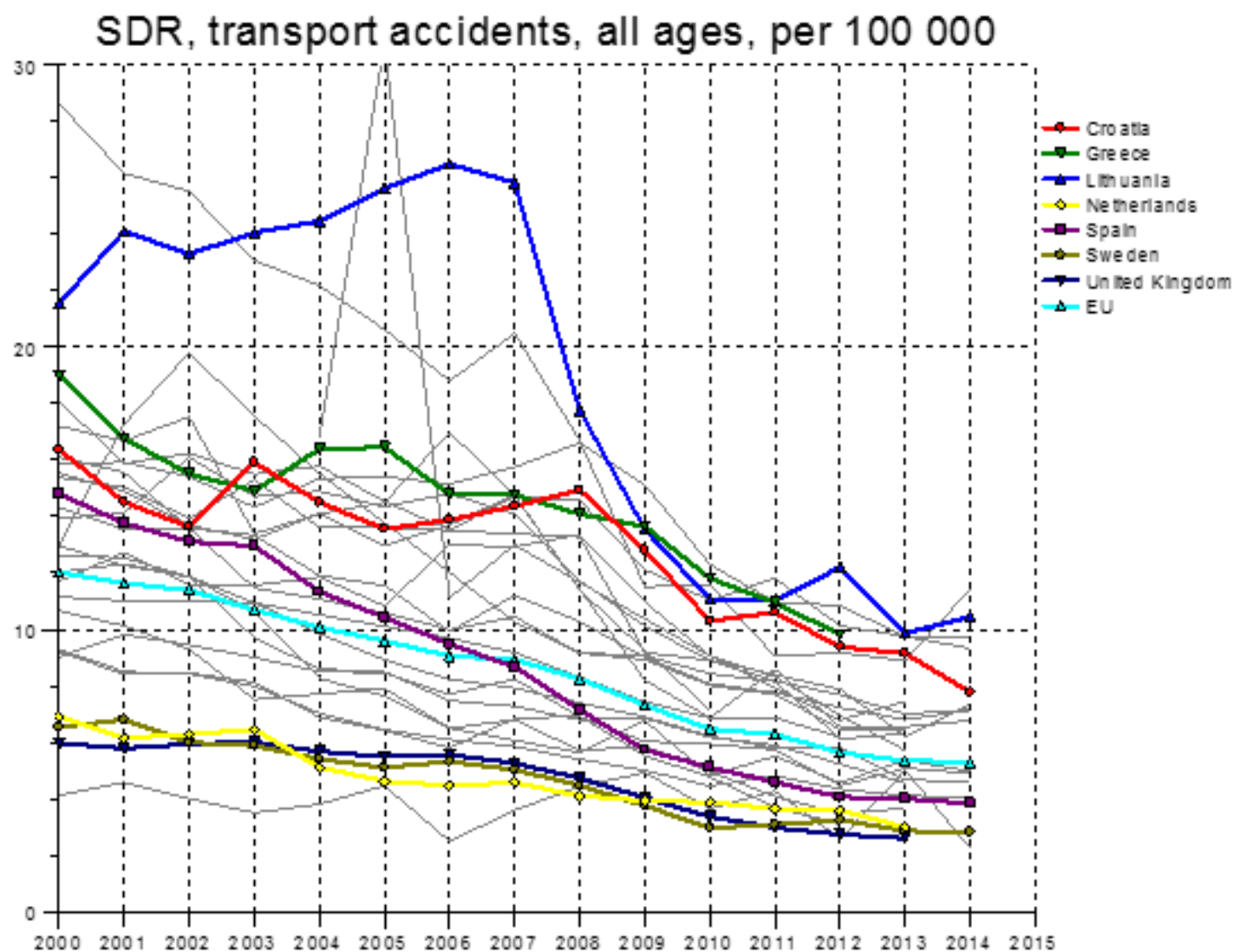
Countries with Vision Zero / Safe System / Sustainable Safety National Policy

- Australia
- Austria
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Finland
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Poland
- Slovenia
- Sweden

Source: IRTAD 2014 Annual Report



Road traffic deaths



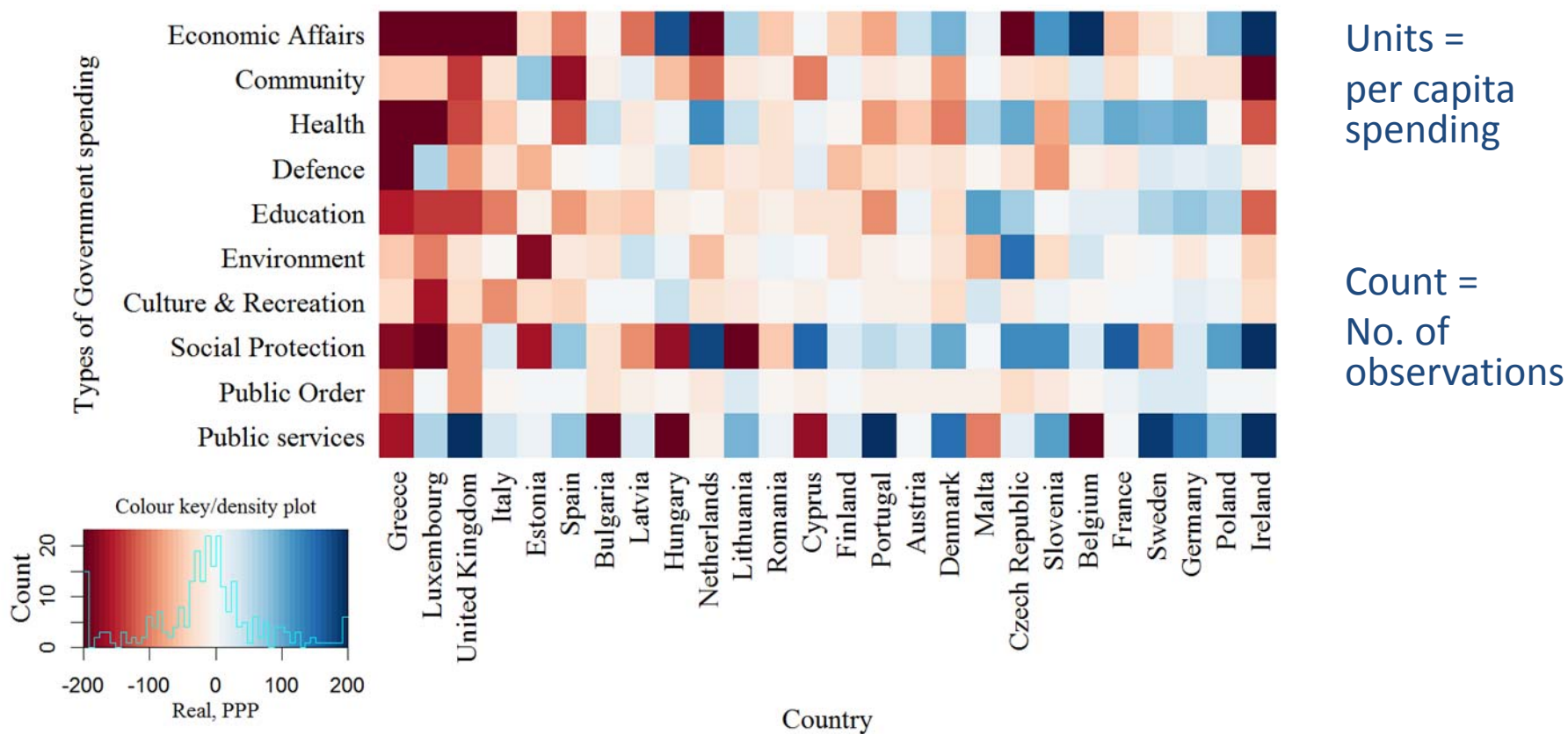


FISCAL POLICIES



Patterns of austerity: 2009-2011

Red = reduced spending | Blue = increased spending

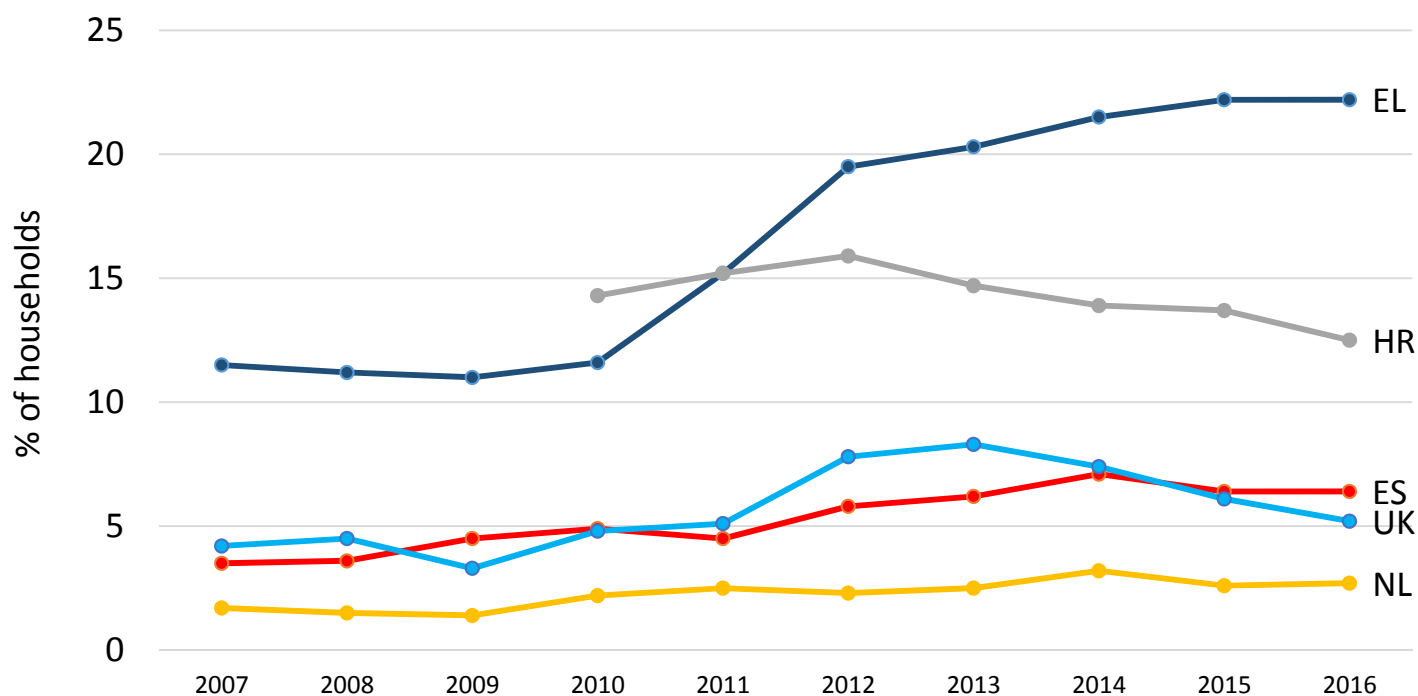


Reeves A, Basu S, McKee M, Marmot M, Stuckler D. Austere or not? UK coalition government budgets and health inequalities. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine. 2013.



Living conditions

Severe material deprivation

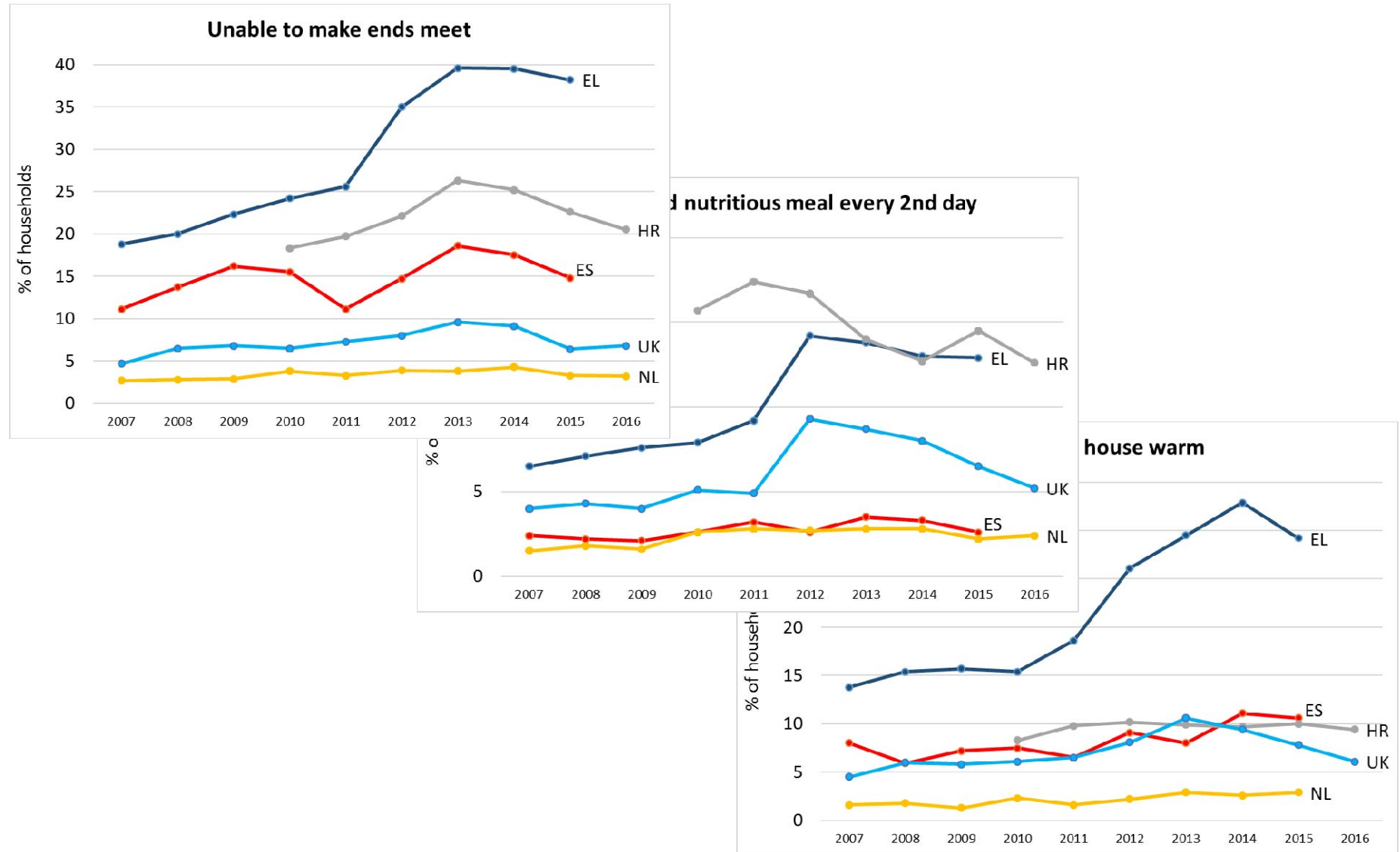


Severe material deprivation: enforced inability to pay for at least four of the following items:
1) to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills; 2) to keep their home adequately warm;
3) to face unexpected expenses; 4) to eat meat or proteins regularly;
5) to go on holiday; 6) a television set;
7) a washing machine; 8) a car; 9) a telephone.

Source: EU-SILC (2017)



Living conditions (EU-SILC)

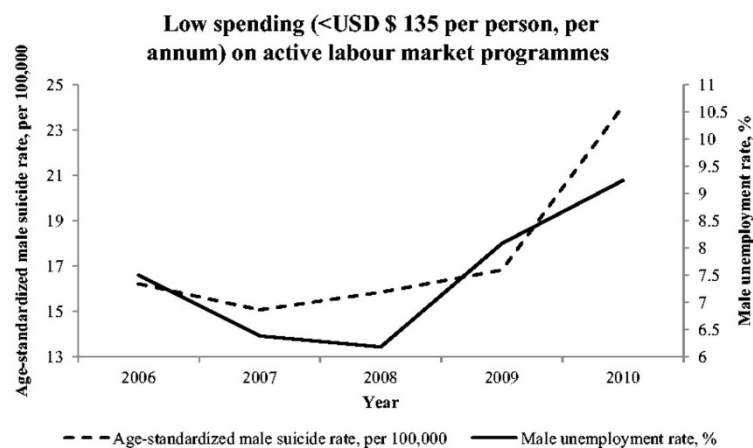
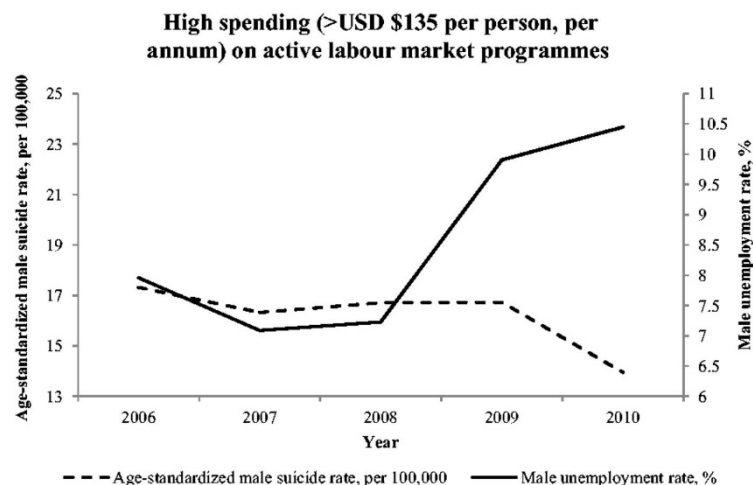




Labour policies

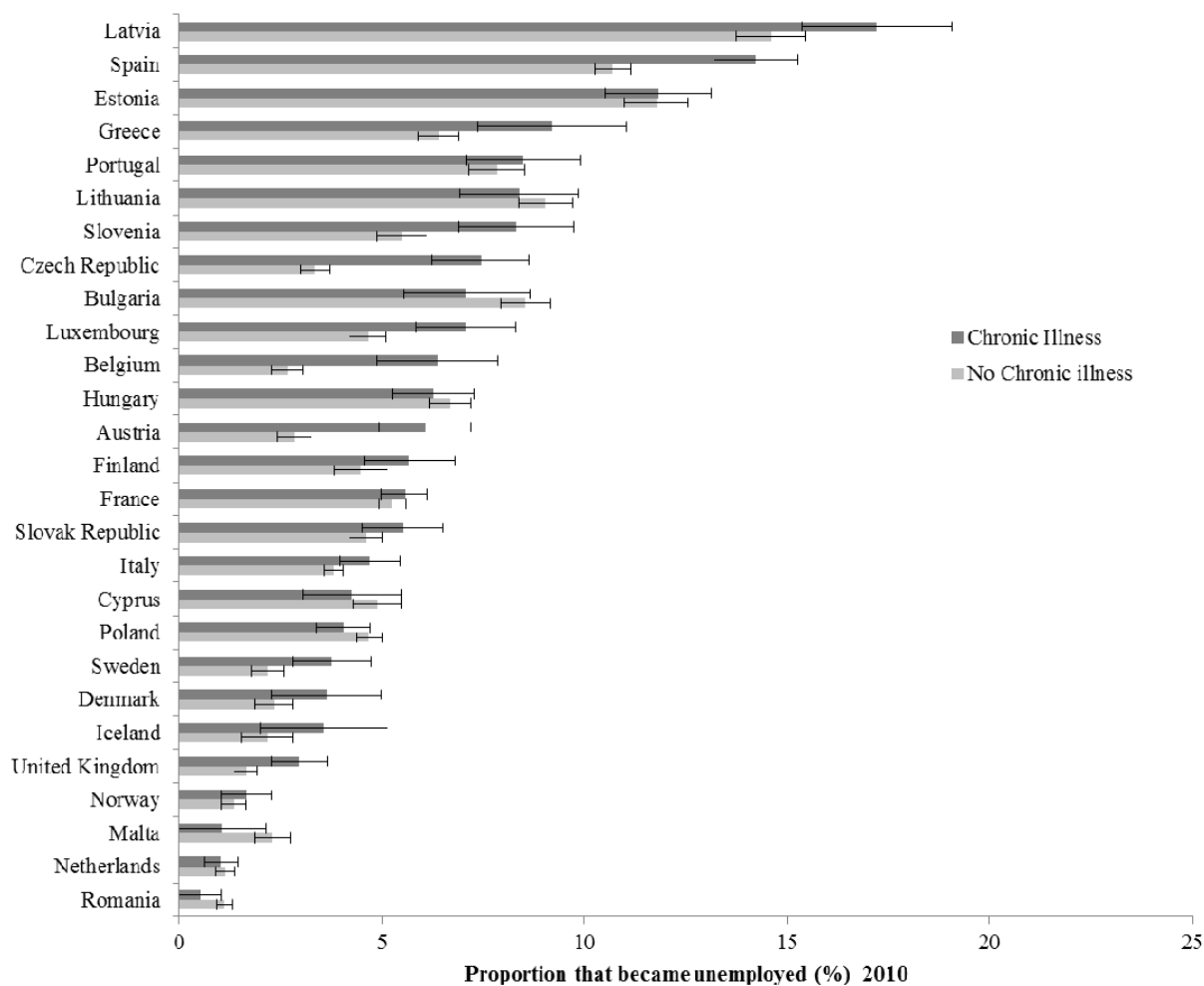
- 6,998 excess male suicides in 20 EU countries in 2008 and 2009
- 1,077 (15%) attributable to rise in unemployment
- ~ 540 prevented by ALMPs
- ~ 210 prevented by social capital in population

Reeves A, McKee M, Gunnell D, et al. Economic shocks, resilience, and male suicides in the Great Recession: cross-national analysis of 20 EU countries. *European Journal of Public Health* 2014.





Unemployment and chronic illness

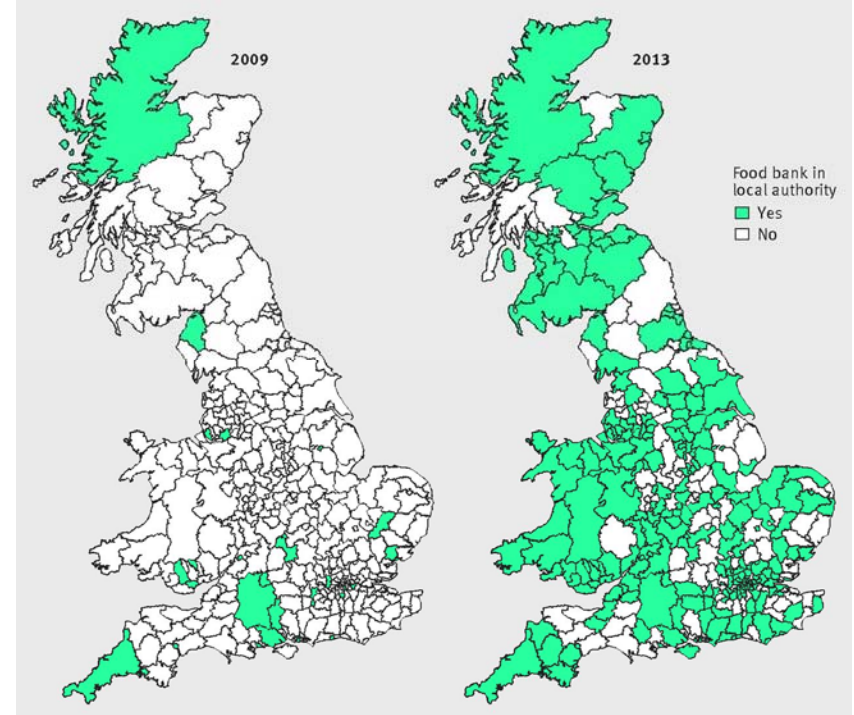


Reeves A et al., Do employment protection policies reduce the relative disadvantage in the labour market experienced by unhealthy people? A natural experiment created by the Great Recession in Europe. Soc Sci Med 2014.



UK: rise in food banks

- ↑ number of food banks
(from 29 in 2009 to 251 in 2013)
- ↑ usage of food banks
(from 0.6 to 2.1 per 100 population
between 2010 and 2013)
- ↓ local authority spending →
↑ probability in food bank opening
(1.6-fold within to years for each
1% budget cut)

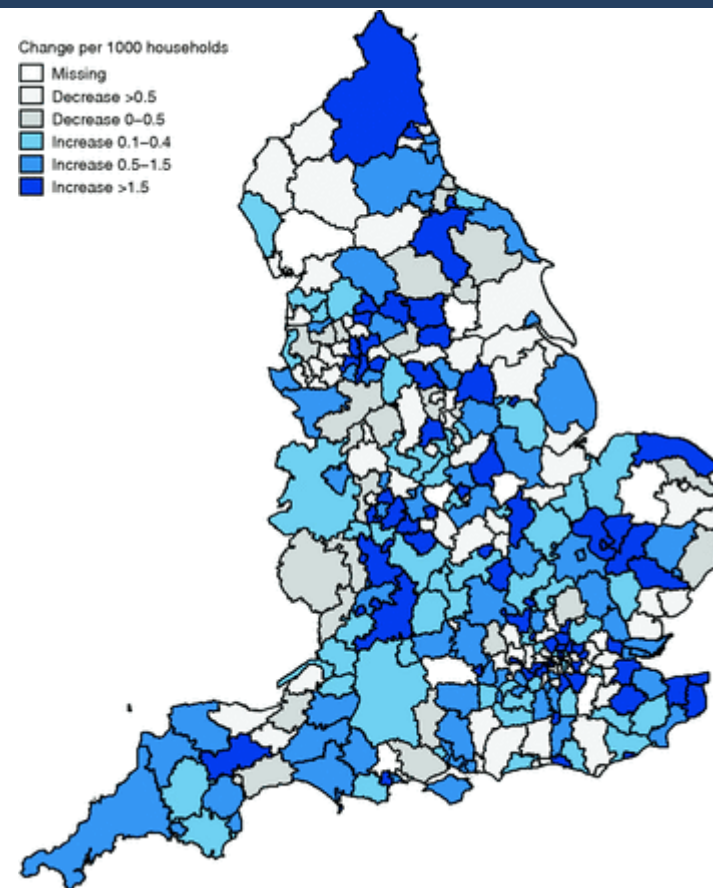


Loopstra Rachel, Reeves Aaron, Taylor-Robinson David, Barr Ben, McKee Martin, Stuckler David et al. Austerity, sanctions, and the rise of food banks in the UK BMJ 2015; 350 :h1775



UK: rise in homelessness

- ↑ homelessness claims (from 3.5 per 1,000 households in 2009 to 4.1 in 2012)
- ↓ public welfare expenditure →
↑ total homelessness claim rate (increase of 0.8 per 1,000 households for each 10% budget cut)
- Captures only those who seek aid



Change in homelessness claim rates between 2009 and 2012 across 323 local authorities in England.

Loopstra R, Reeves A, Barr B, Taylor-Robinson D, McKee M, Stuckler D. The impact of economic downturns and budget cuts on homelessness claim rates across 323 local authorities in England, 2004-12. J Public Health (Oxf). 2015 Sep 12. pii: fdv126

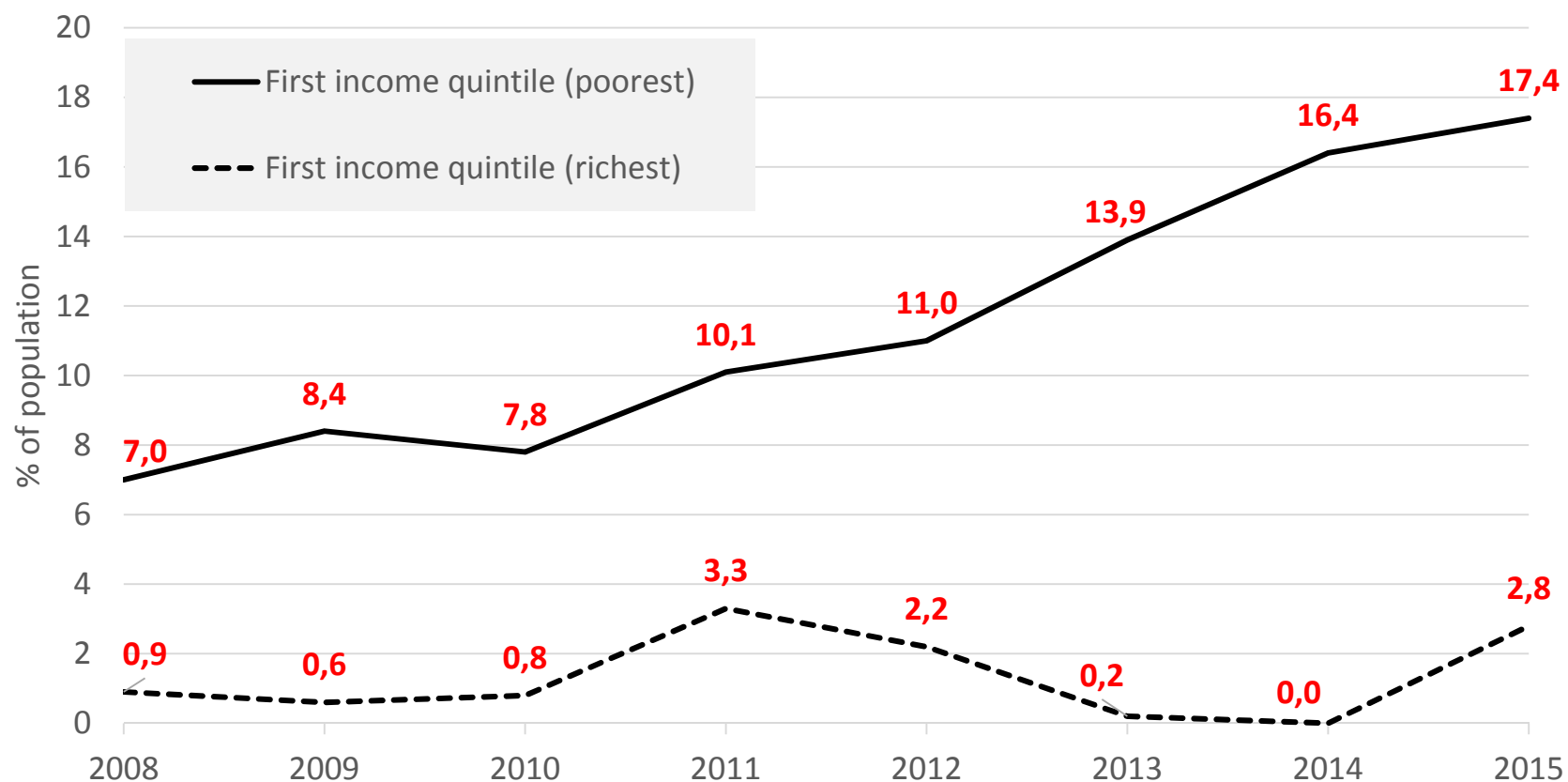


INEQUALITIES



Inequalities – access to care

Unmet medical need in Greece (EU-SILC)





Inequalities – risk behaviours

Smoking prevalence in the Netherlands (EHIS 2014)

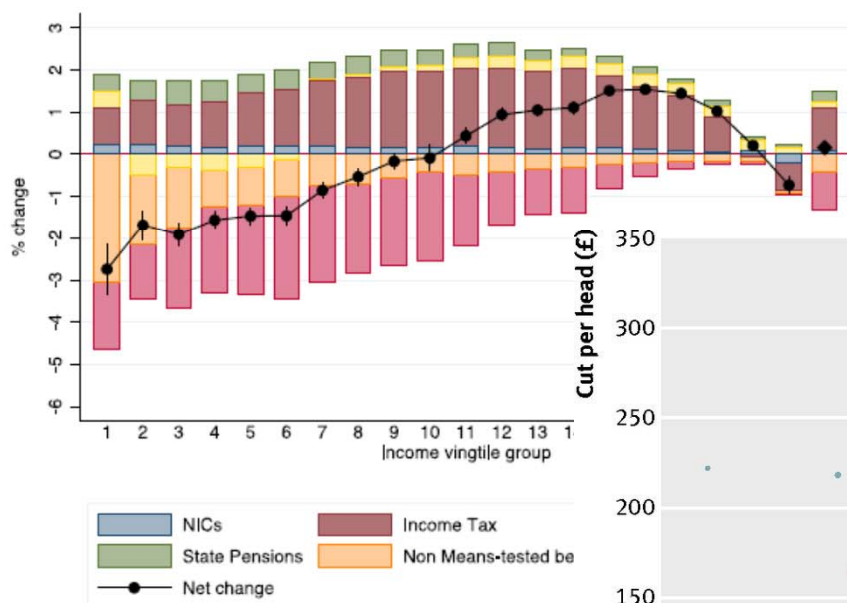
	Total	Richest	Poorest
All	17%	12%	24%
Males	19%	13%	29%
Females	16%	11%	20%



Inequalities – austerity (UK)

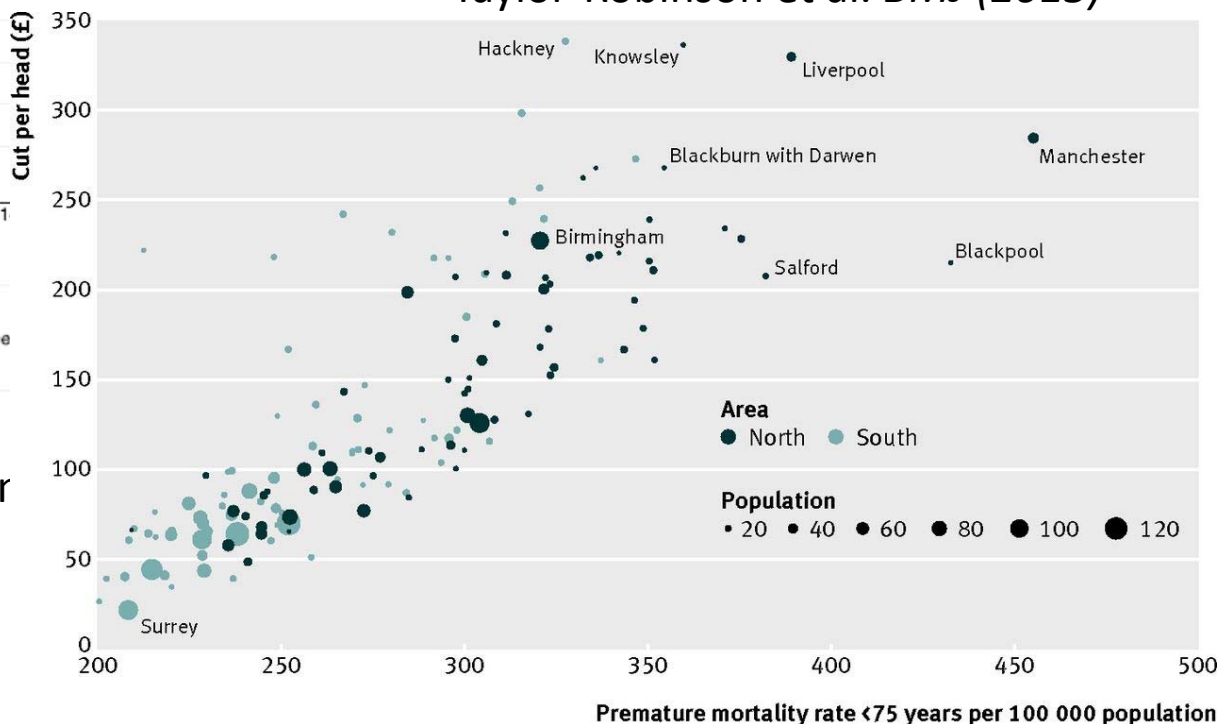
Figure 4.1: Percentage change in household disposable income by income vingtile group due to policy changes 2010 to 2014/15

(a) Compared with May 2010 policies uprated to 2014/15 using CPI



De Agostini, Hills and Sutherlar

Taylor-Robinson et al. *BMJ* (2013)





Some of Successes & Failures

Successes

- Reduction in mortality from most causes, due to improved healthcare, child health, infectious disease control, prevention and treatment of chronic conditions
- Overall sustained success in tobacco control and road safety measures
- Some countries (e.g. France) tightened alcohol regulation and improved outcomes

Failures

- Amenable mortality still high in Eastern Europe
- Delays in acting on tobacco in Denmark, Germany, and Austria
- Rise in alcohol-related deaths in Finland and the UK
- Lack of road safety measures or their enforcement (e.g. Greece and Lithuania)
- Austerity policies are failing health, particularly of the most vulnerable people



Conditions for successful implementation

Table 15.2 Conditions for successful health policy mentioned in Chapters 2 to 12

<i>Policy area</i>	<i>Will</i>	<i>Means</i>
Tobacco	Advocacy by civil society (+)	International exchange of evidence (+)
	Clarity of message (+)	Tobacco industry influence (-)
	Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (+)	Corruption (-)
	Tobacco industry influence (-)	
Alcohol	Cognitive dissonance (-)	Availability of evidence (+)
	Alcohol industry influence (-)	Economic collapse (-)
		European integration (-)
		Lack of industry regulation (-)
Food	Lack of awareness (headline) (-)	Availability of evidence (+)
	Advocacy groups (+)	European integration (±)
	Collaboration with industry (+)	Working across government (+)
Fertility, pregnancy and childbirth	Pronatalist policies (-)	Availability of registrations (+)
	Rejection of abortion (-)	Lack of evidence (-)
		International collaboration (+)
Child health	Professional engagement (+)	Disruption of health system (-)
	Advocacy groups (+)	International collaboration (+)
	Immunization scares (-)	Genuine communication (+)
	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (+)	Professionals in media (±)
Infectious diseases	Reluctance to regulate (-)	Surveillance systems (+)
	Civil society involvement (+)	Centralized systems (+)
	Stigma of deviant behaviour (-)	International collaboration (+)
		Forward-looking institutions (+)
Hypertension	Professional compliance (+)	Availability of evidence (+)
	Evidence of amount of hidden salt in food (+)	Drug availability (+)
Cancer screening	Professional advocacy (+)	Availability of evidence (+)
	Professional inertia (-)	Screening register (+)
		Effective organization (+)
Mental health	Evidence on hidden burden of disease (+)	Lack of outcome data (-)
	Professional awareness (+)	
	Stigma (-)	
Road traffic safety	Aversion of 'nanny state' (-)	Availability of evidence (+)
	High political support (+)	Innovation in industry (+)
		International collaboration (+)
		European integration (+)
Air pollution	Engagement with environmental movement (+)	Availability of evidence (+)
		Innovation in industry (+)
		European integration (+)
		Low vehicle turnover (-)

The will and the means:

Will Political commitment
 Business support
 Professional engagement
 Population support

Means Knowledge and information
 Institutional arrangements
 Organisational effectiveness
 Financial resources



Key messages

- Unequal health of Europeans – East/West divide still in place, but within each region there are own stories of successes and failures
- Health policies in the West contributed to large improvements in outcomes, more progress is needed in the East
- Public health policies show mixed picture of successes and failures (largely inaction or delayed action) and a great potential to improve health
- Inequalities within countries are wide, even in countries which generally perform well, and austerity measures can exacerbate them
- European countries face similar health challenges and successes and failures present vast learning opportunities, but results depend on the will and the means to implement policies



Thank you!

Monitoring impact of recession and austerity:

European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies

HEALTH & FINANCIAL CRISIS MONITOR

This web monitor is an evidence resource engine dedicated to monitoring the effects of the financial crisis on health and health systems. [Read more...](#)

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Another study shows increase in income inequality and decrease in access to care across the EU during the recession [ncsl.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/...](#)

[Income inequality and fo...](#)

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HIGHLIGHTS

Recommended articles from the last HFCM Database update (July 2016)

Karamitolas M, Heino P, McKee M, Stuckler D, Legido-Quigley H. [Effects of the Global Financial Crisis on Health in High Income OECD Countries: A Narrative Review](#). *Int J Health Serv*. 2016;46(2):208-40.

Loopstra R, McKee M, Katikireddy SV, Taylor-Robinson D, Barr B, Stuckler D. [Austerity and old-age mortality in England: a longitudinal cross-local](#)

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ABOUT THE EASP
The Andalusian School of Public Health (EASP) is a publicly-owned entity that offers services in

ABOUT THE HFCM
The Health & Financial Crisis Monitor (HFCM) has been established by the European

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Monitoring health impact of the financial crisis and health system responses, also linked with the Health & Financial Crisis Monitor - on behalf of @OBShealth

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European Observatory @OBSfincrisis · 22 May 2014

Take a look at Health & FinCrisis Monitor hfcm.eu & please fill in quick survey surveymonkey.com/s/6VSLZ2K to help us improve it

European Observatory @OBSfincrisis · Aug 9

Another study shows increase in income inequality and decrease in access to care across the EU during the recession

Income inequality and foregone medical care in Eur...

The association between income inequality and societal performance has been intensely debated in recent decades. This paper reports how unmet need for med...

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