

Doing math one-handed?  
*Inequality and the marriage problem*

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American Sociological Association  
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# Divergence

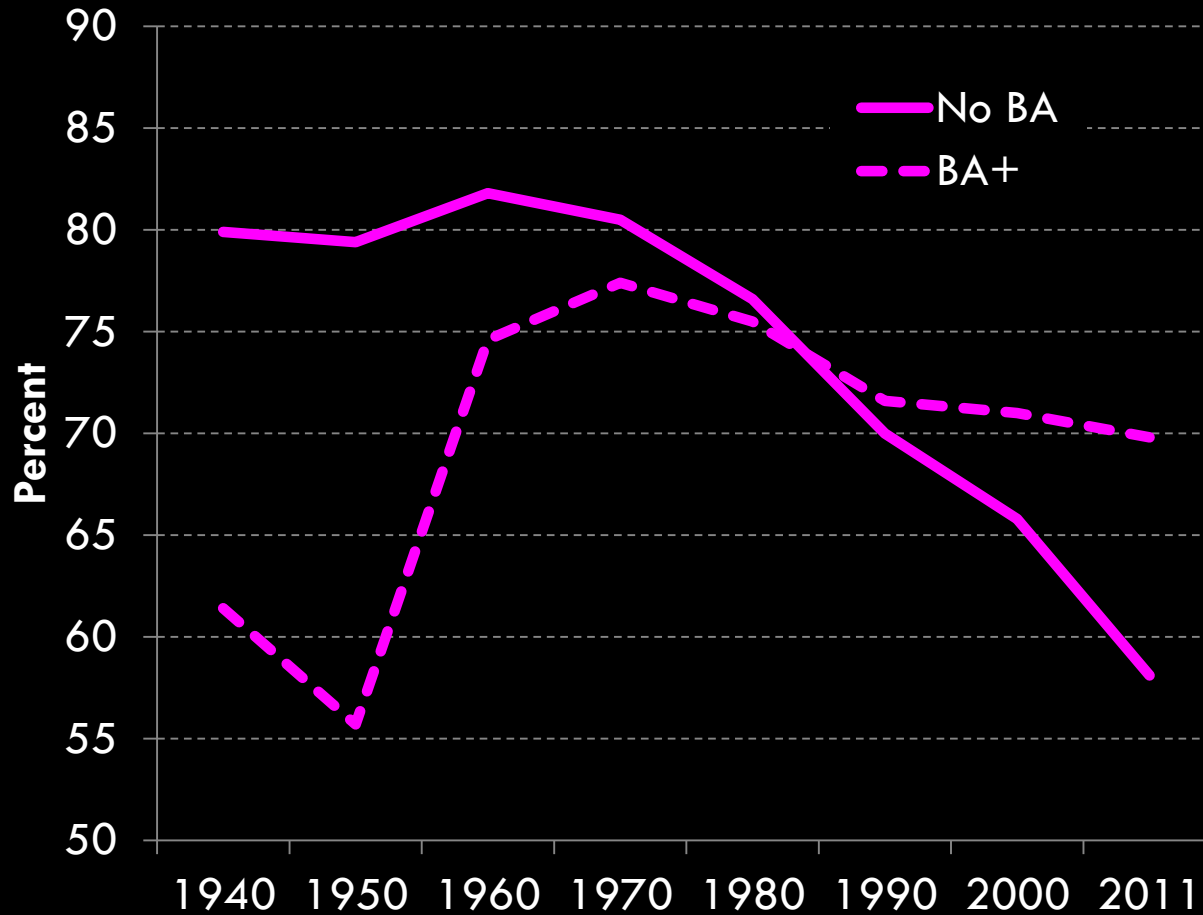
Marriage experience is increasingly differentiated by social class.

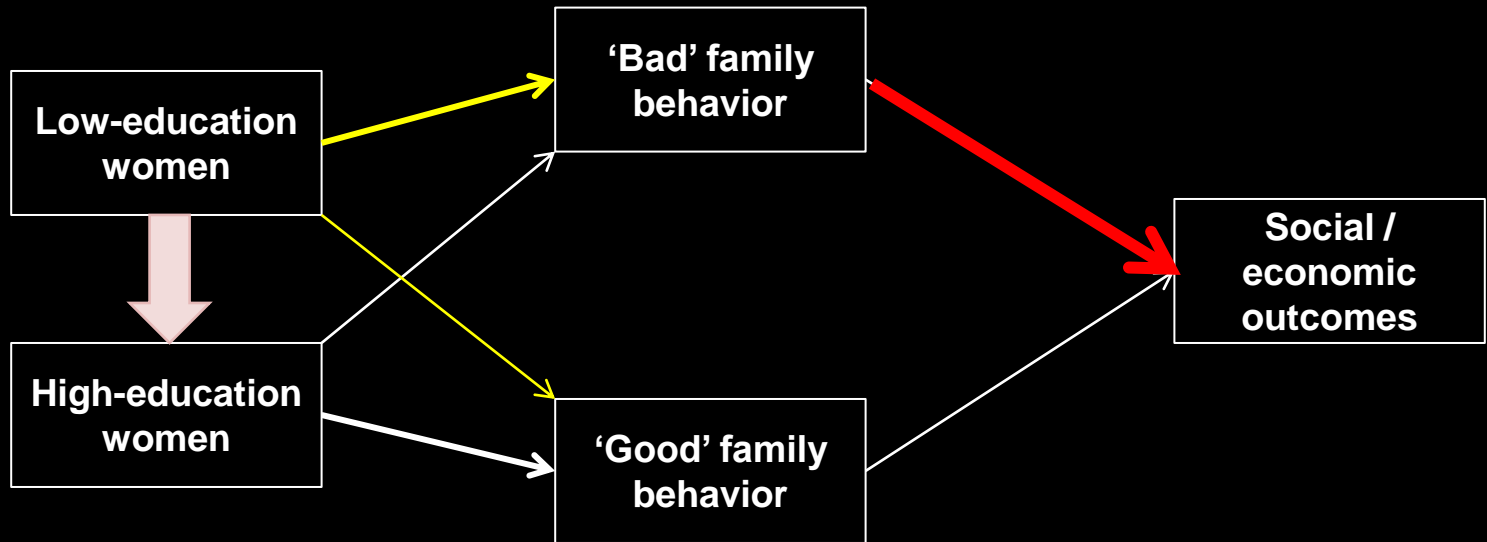
## Possible responses

- **Change the marriage pattern**
  - Delay childbearing, increase marriage, reduce instability
- **Change the composition of the population**
  - Increase education
- **Change the effect of family structure**
  - Reduce the (relative) benefits of marriage by improving experience and conditions of single people

# Trend 1, Intervention 0

*Women married (not separated), ages 35-54*





**Family change strategy:** Decrease the “bad” family behavior of low-education women (& men).

**Alternatives (a):** Moving women into the high-education group

**Alternatives (b):** Mitigate the harms associated with “bad” family behavior.

Change the family pattern

# Welfare reform!

110 STAT. 2110

PUBLIC LAW 104-193—AUG. 22, 1996

## **TITLE I—BLOCK GRANTS FOR TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES**

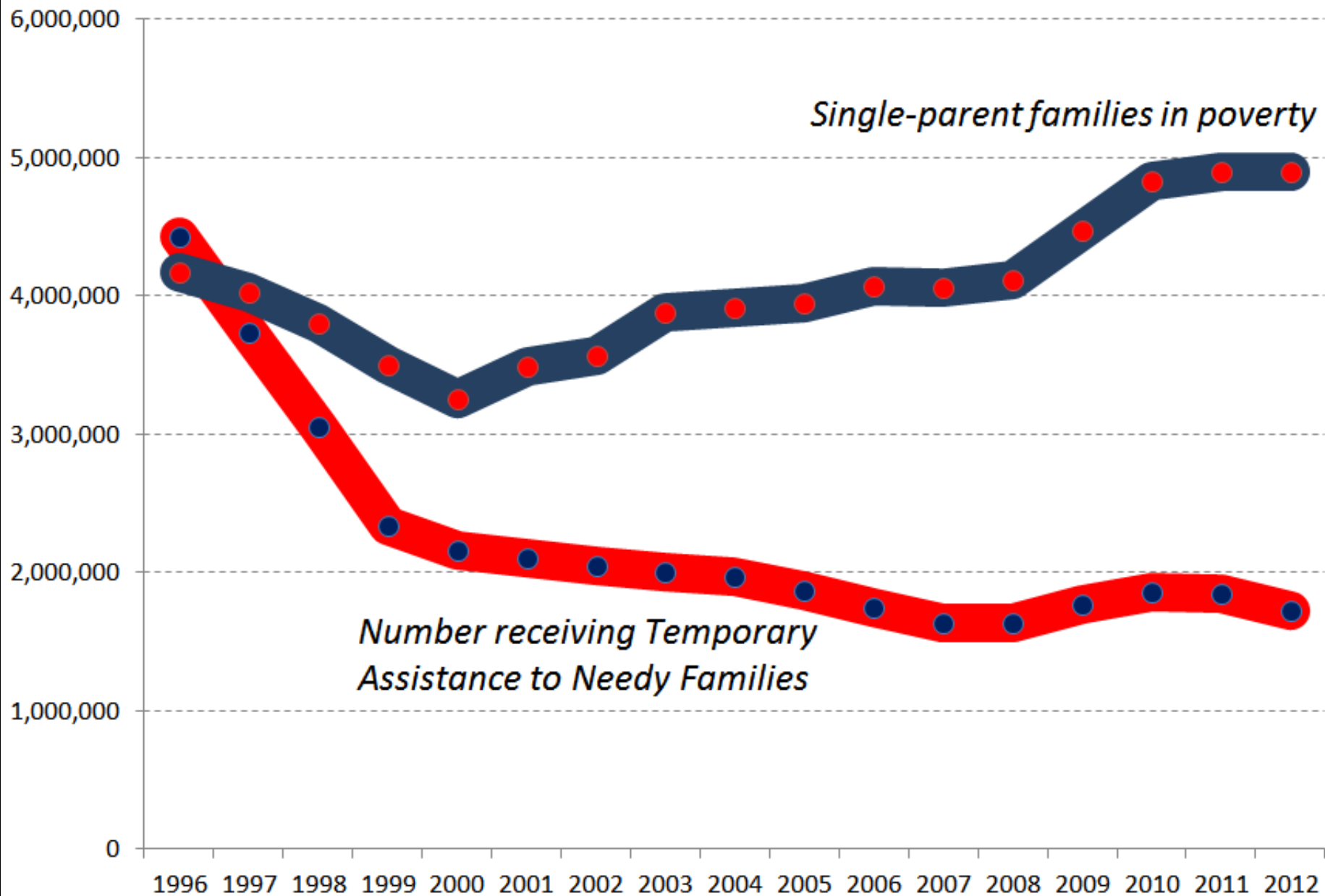
42 USC 601 note. **SEC. 101. FINDINGS.**

The Congress makes the following findings:

- (1) Marriage is the foundation of a successful society.
- (2) Marriage is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of children.

(10) Therefore, in light of this demonstration of the crisis in our Nation, it is the sense of the Congress that prevention of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and reduction in out-of-wedlock birth are very important Government interests and the policy contained in part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (as amended by section 103(a) of this Act) is intended to address the crisis.

## Poverty and welfare receipt for single-parent families, 1996-2012



# Bethany Christian Svcs: \$800k in 2013

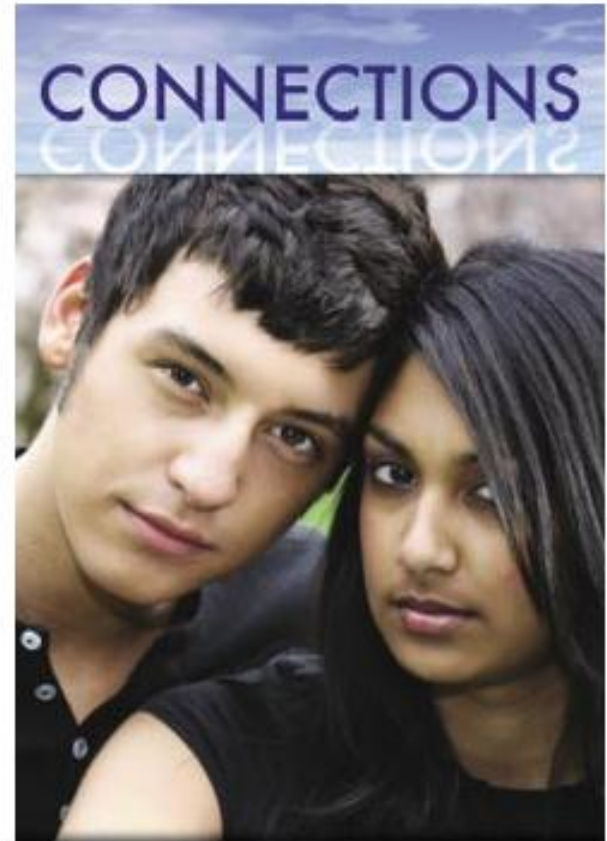
The two of you want what's **best** for your baby what's **best** for your baby is the two of you!

Marriage isn't just a good idea. When it comes to raising children, it's almost always the **best** idea.

**New parents** want what's **best** for their babies, which usually means that they want to do everything they can to see that their children have the **best** that they can possibly provide. In considering what is "best" for their children, parents may think about their finances, their living situations, their jobs, and what they will do about caring for their babies while they work. But sometimes parents overlook the baby's most important potential asset of all...the relationship the parents have with each other.

## What Is CONNECTIONS?

Connections is a *free*, voluntary program for couples or individuals who are in the process of becoming new parents or who have recently become new parents. The program is led by trained coaching couples who help:

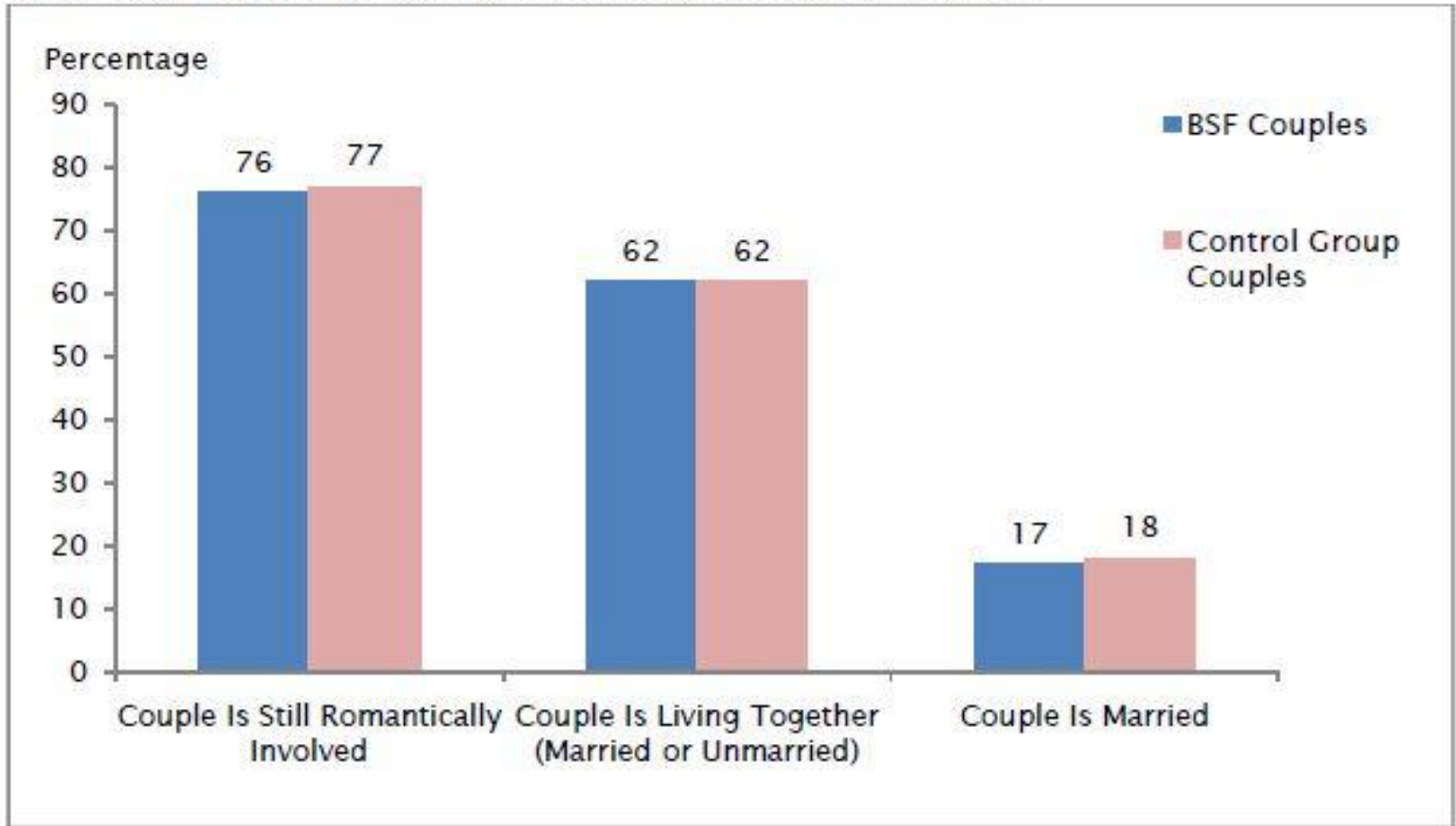


*Build stronger relationships and improve parenting skills. Reinforce healthy decisions about marriage, parenting, and household management. Assist couples with wedding plans and arrangements, when needed or desired.*



# Healthy (spending on) Marriage (promotion)

Figure ES.2. Impact of BSF on Couples' Relationship Status at 15 Months



Building Strong Families: 8 cities + 5100 couples + \$millions = Nothing

# Not just marriage promotion

*video from Bethany CS:* <https://t.co/IXEgADGSiy>

# Enlist the media!

“We also desperately need help from nongovernment institutions like the media and the entertainment community. They have a tremendous influence on our culture and they should join in when it comes to strengthening families.”

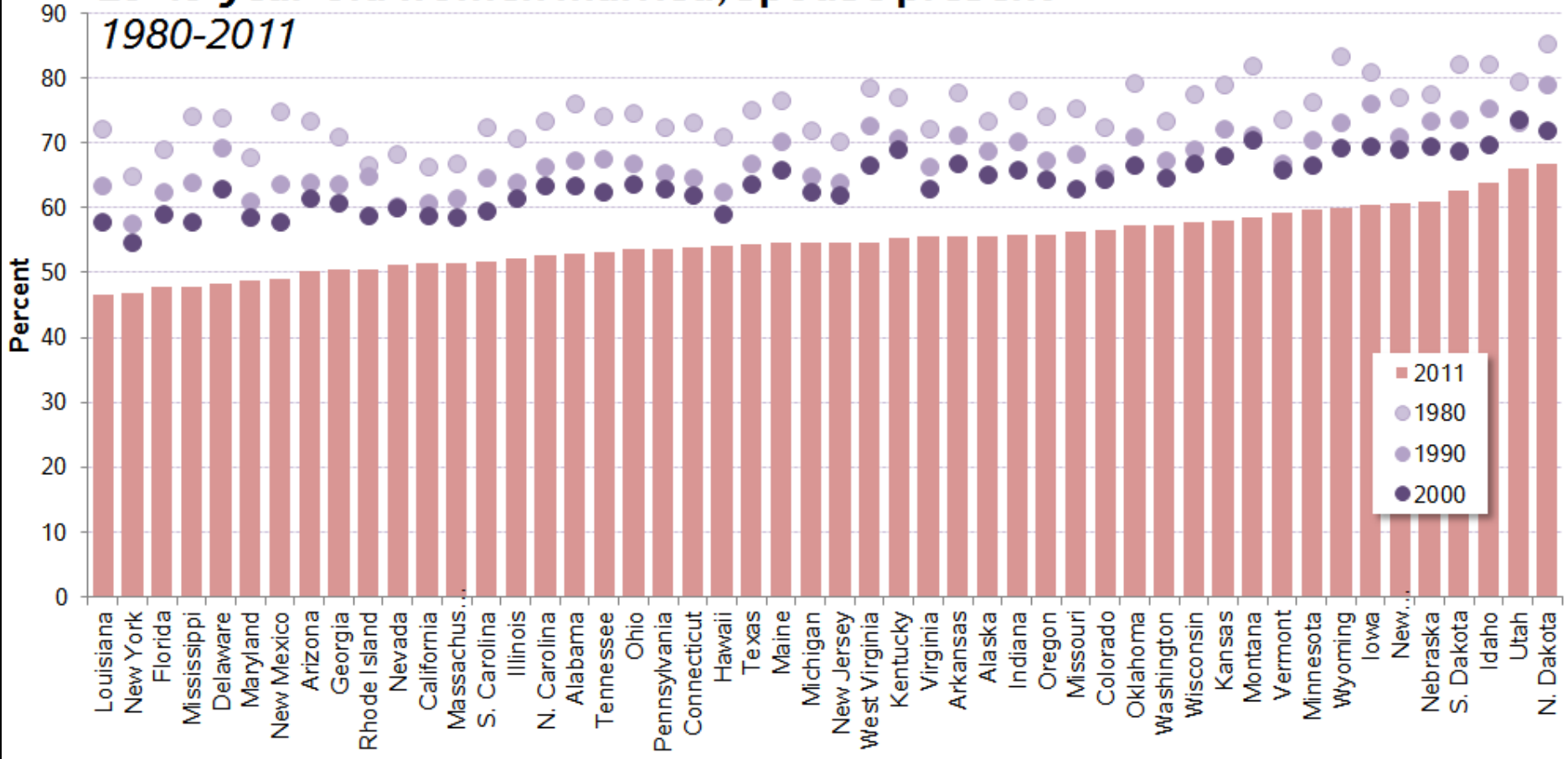
– *Dan Quayle, 1996*

Our nation’s leaders, including the president, must engage Hollywood in a conversation about popular culture ideas about marriage and family formation, including constructive critiques and positive ideas for changes in media depictions of marriage and fatherhood.”

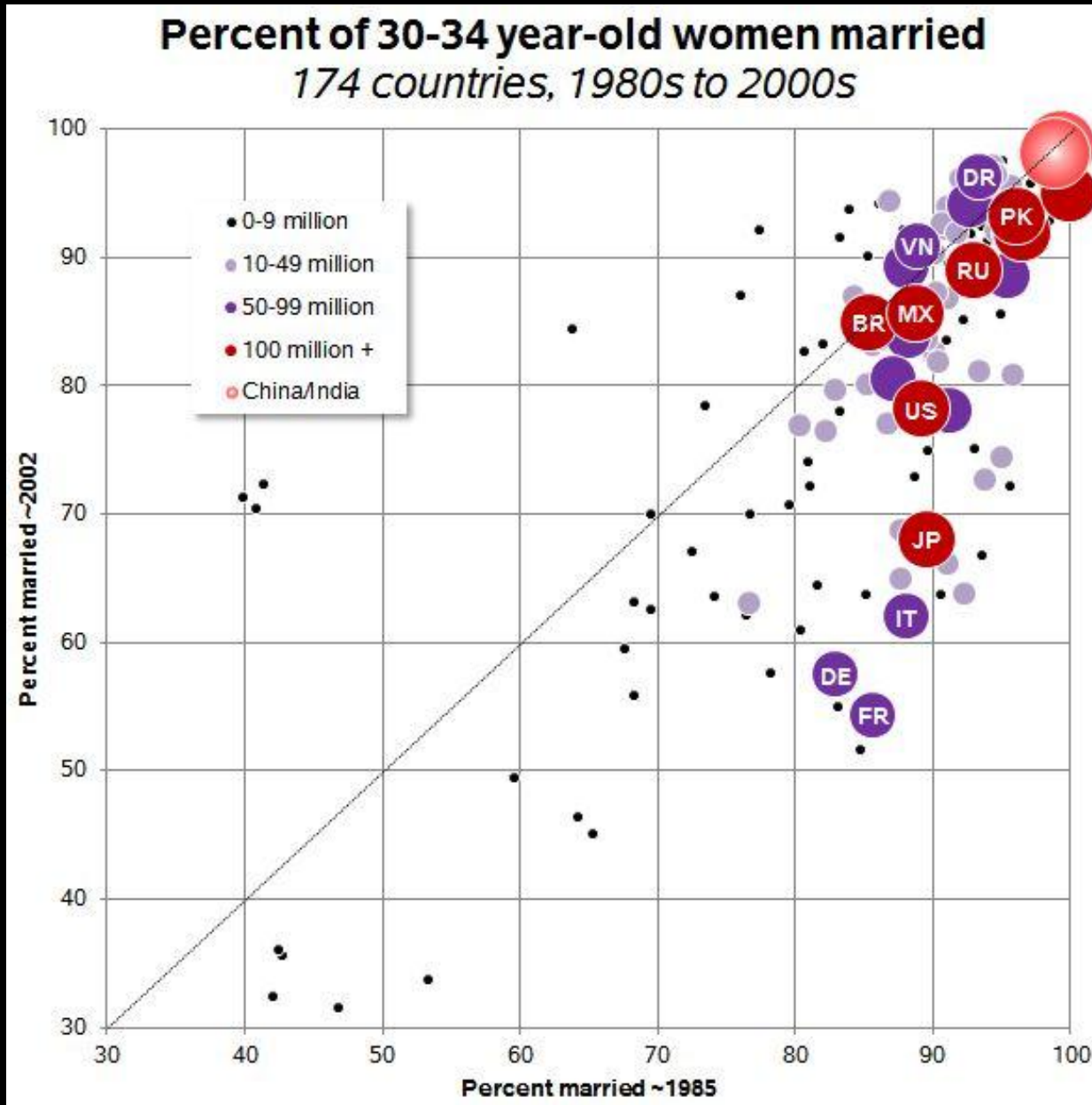
– *National Marriage Project, 2012*

# Marriage decline: Every state, every decade

**25-49 year-old women married, spouse present**  
*1980-2011*



# Worldwide decline



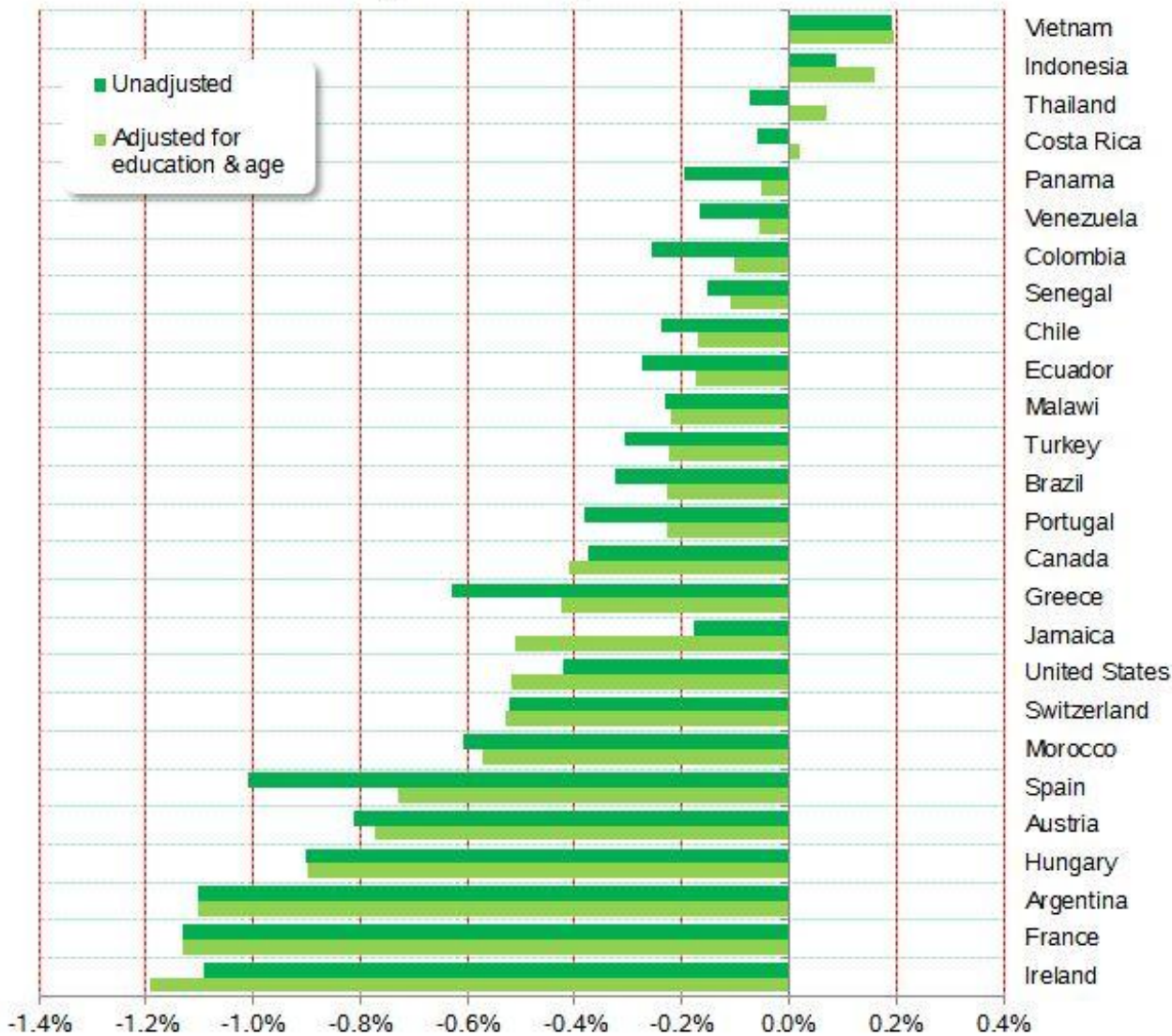
87% in falling-marriage countries

Only 4 over 50 million pop have rising marriage (Philippines, Vietnam, Egypt, Congo)

UN Data

# Worldwide decline

Average annual change in percentage of women married  
ages 25-49, ~1980-2010



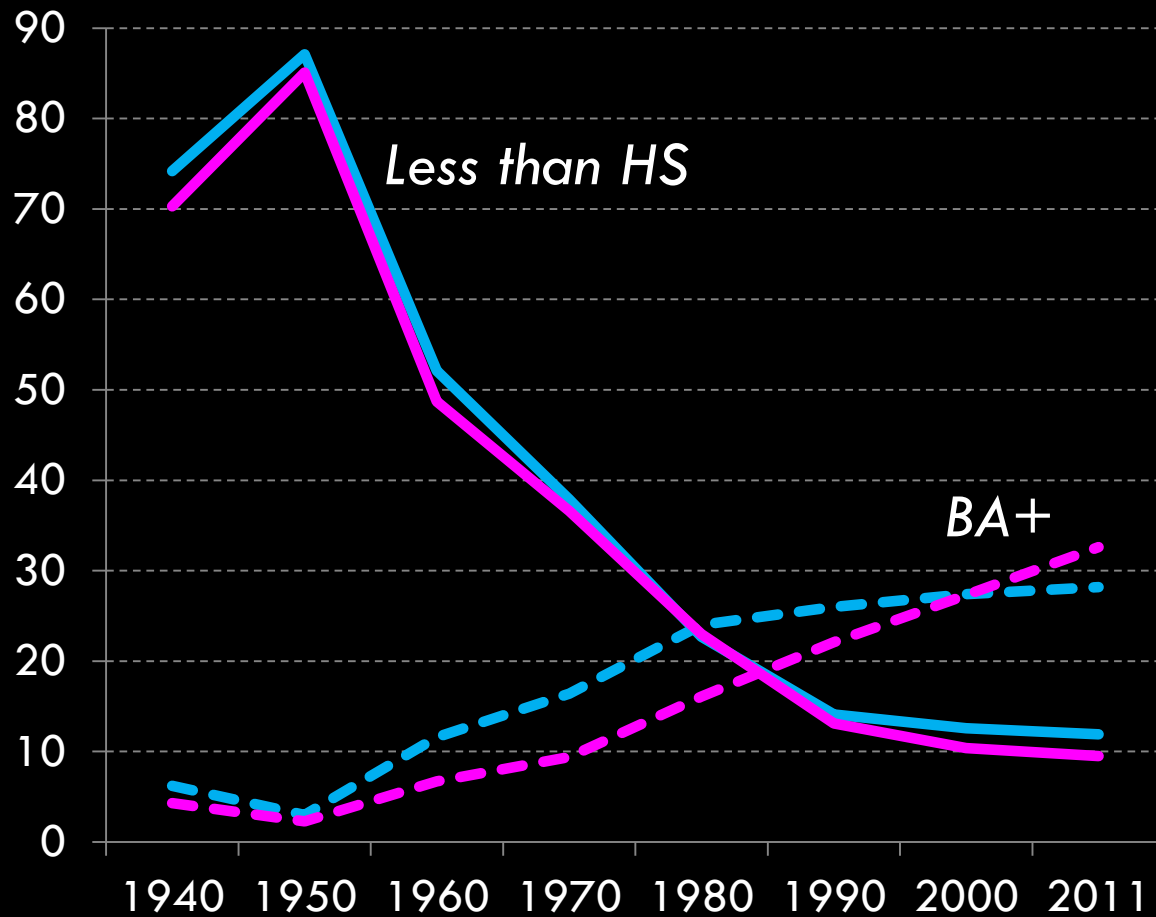
26 countries  
N = 40 mil

After age and  
education  
adjustments, 22  
have declining  
marriage

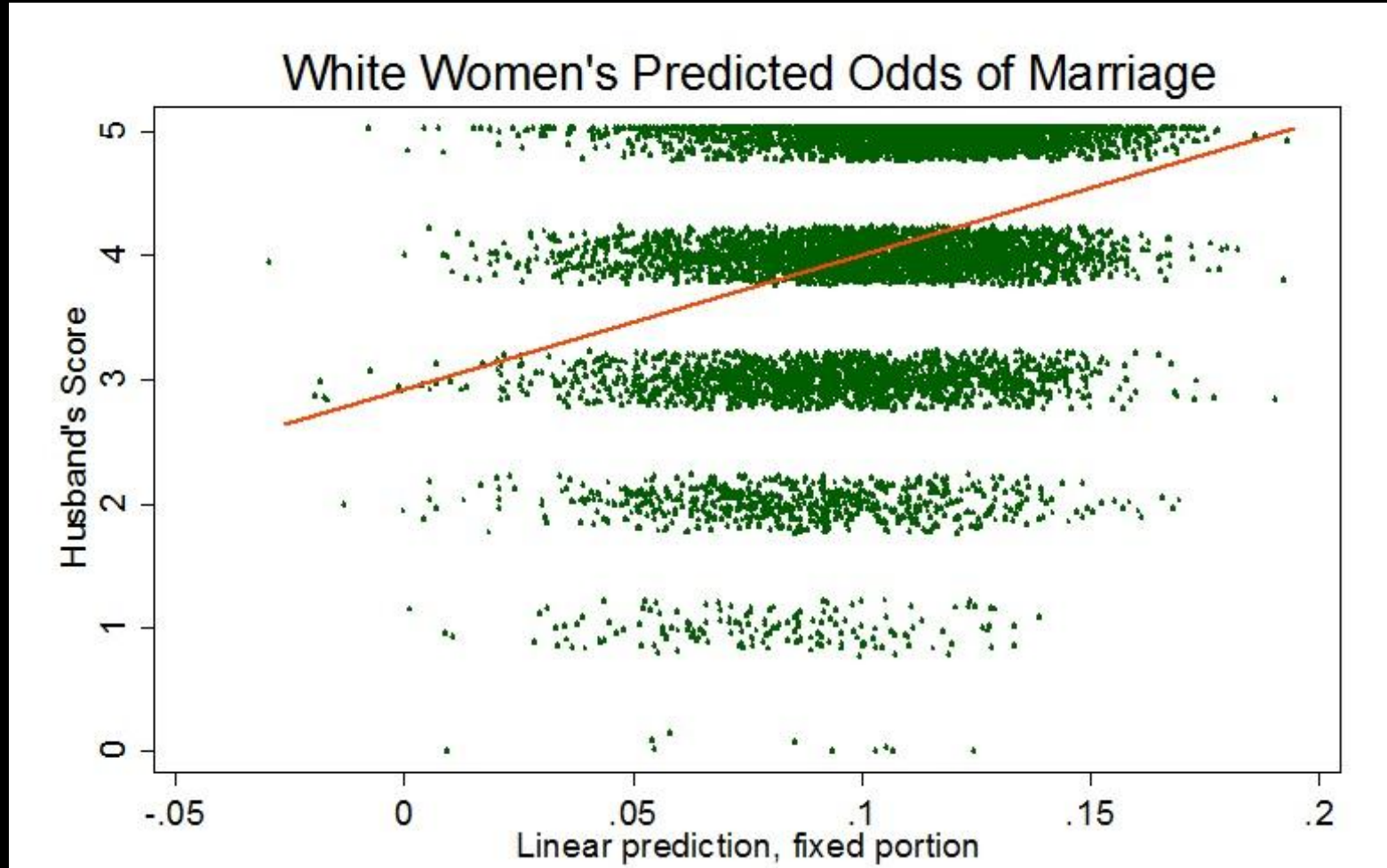
IPUMS International

# Change the composition

*Educational attainment, ages 25-54*



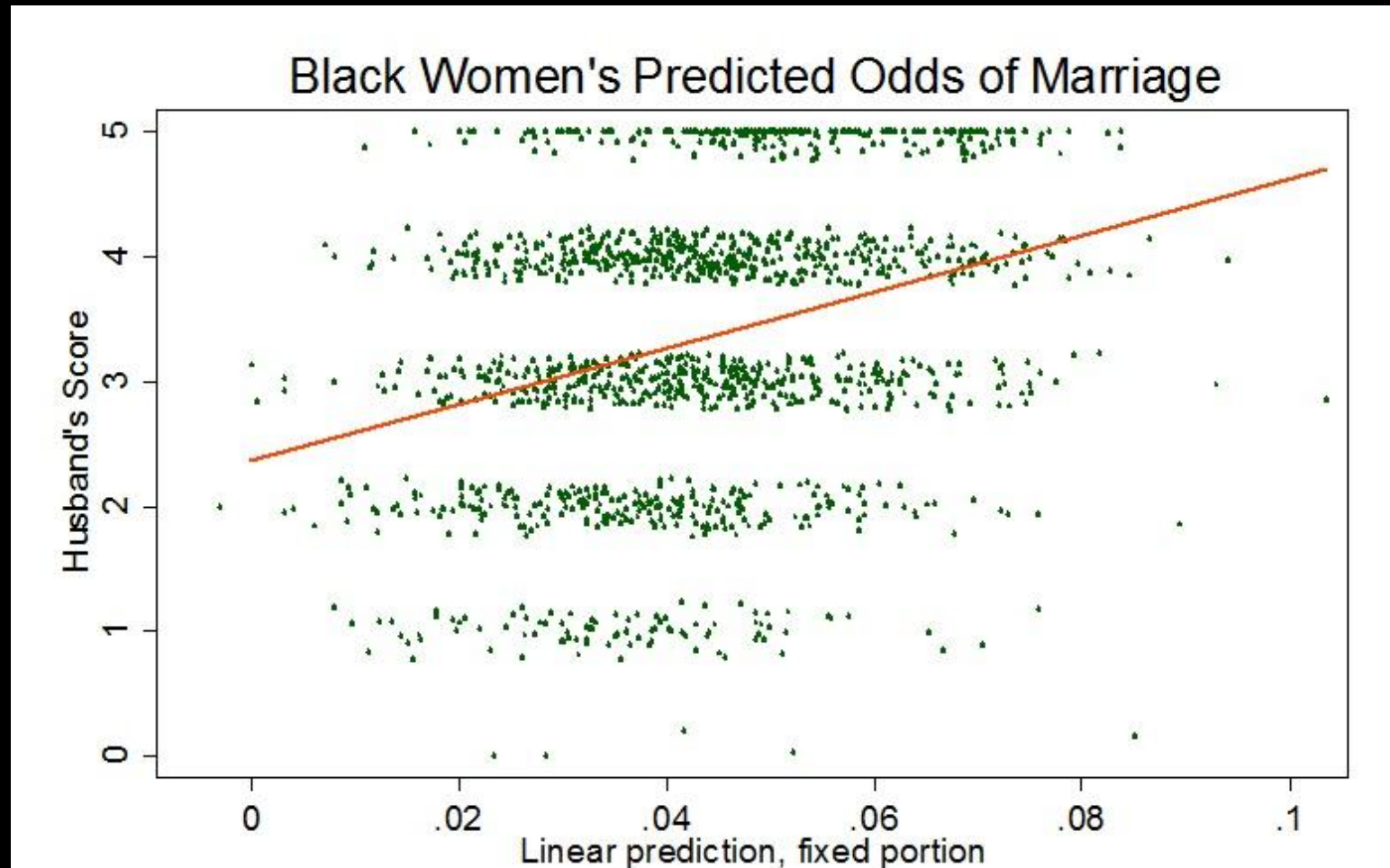
# Who are they going to marry?



The lower the odds of marriage, the lower the predicted 'quality' of husband.



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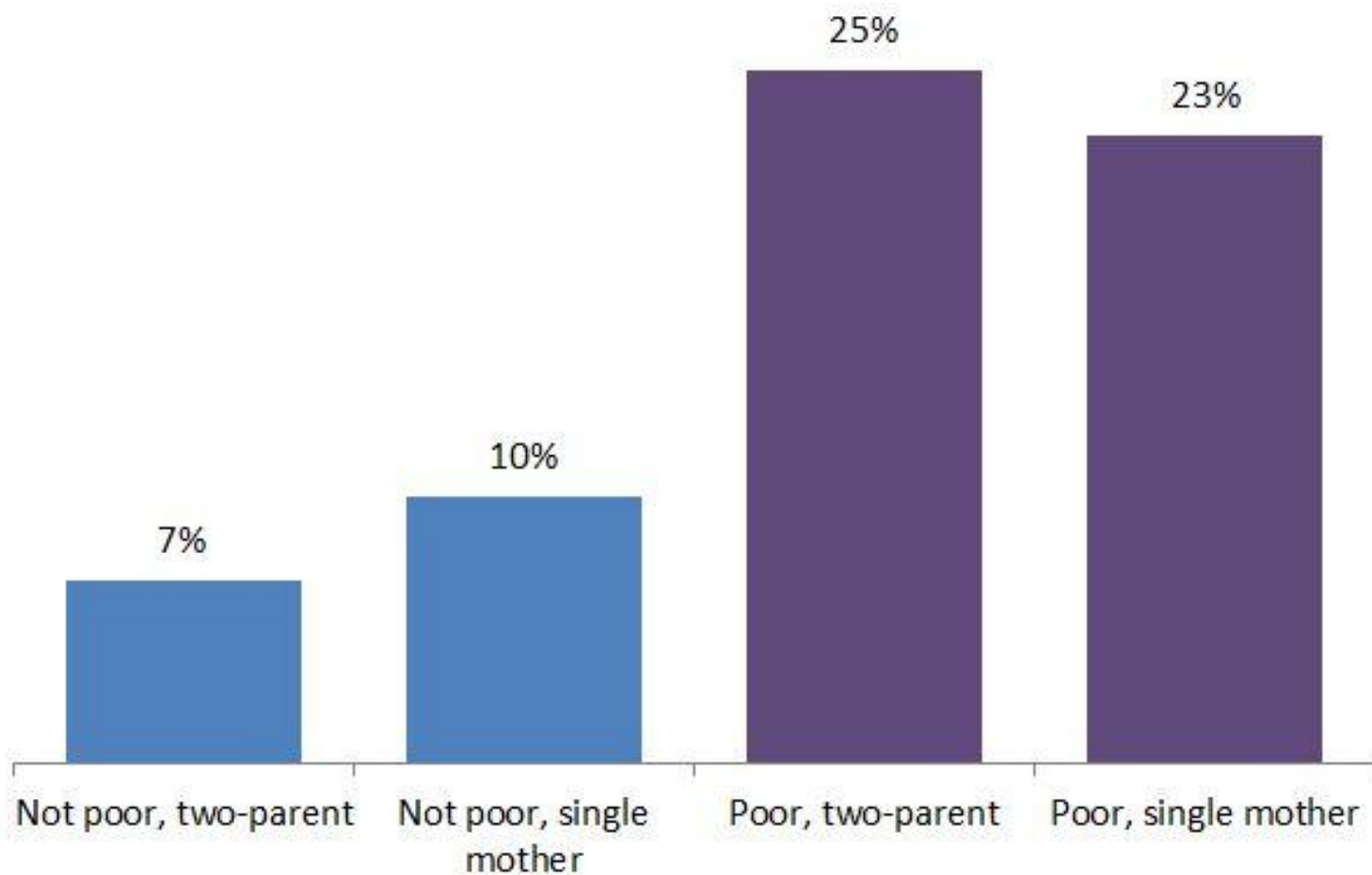


The lower the odds of marriage, the lower the predicted 'quality' of husband.

Change the effect

## Percent of adult mothers in poverty

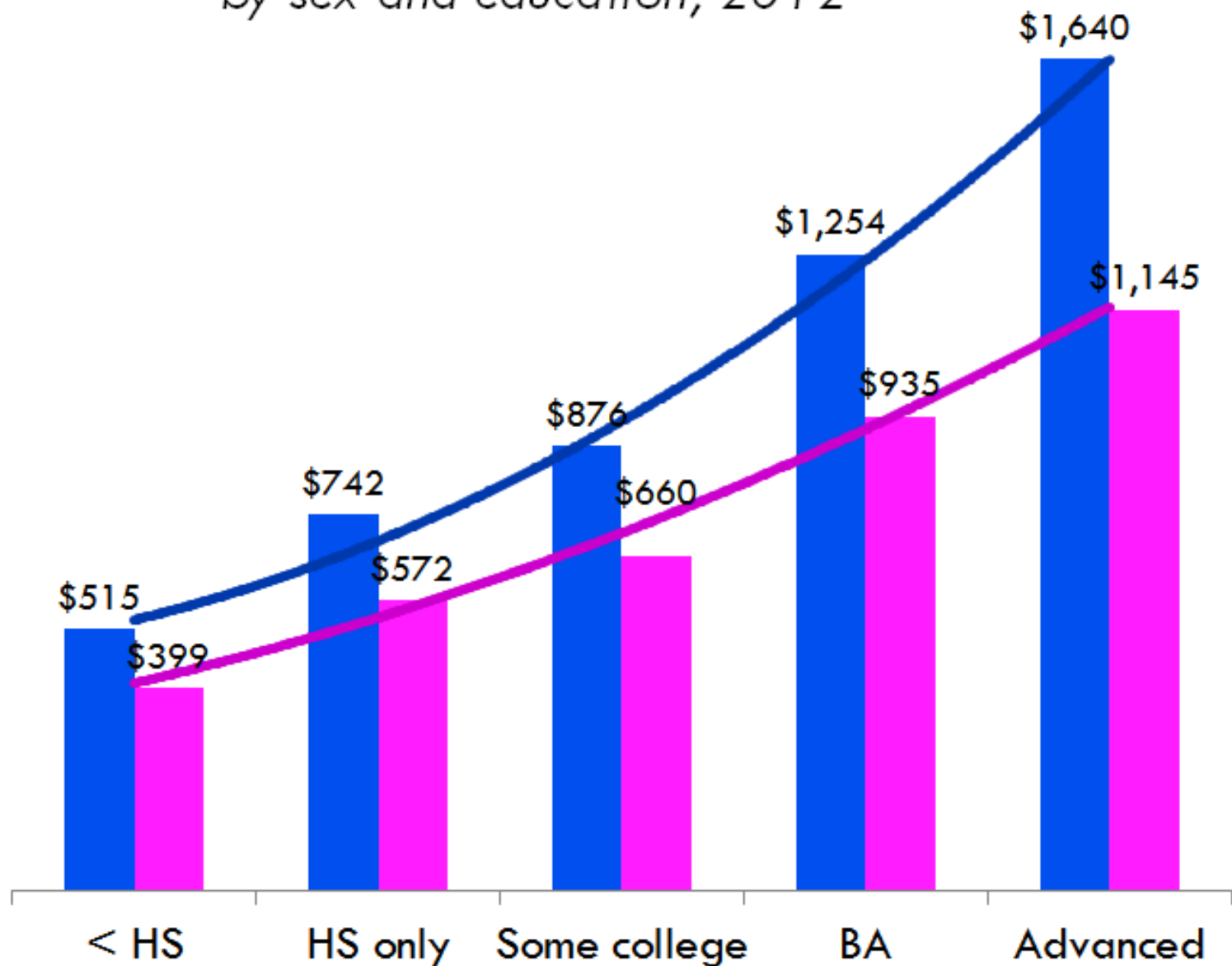
*by poverty and family structure when they were teens*

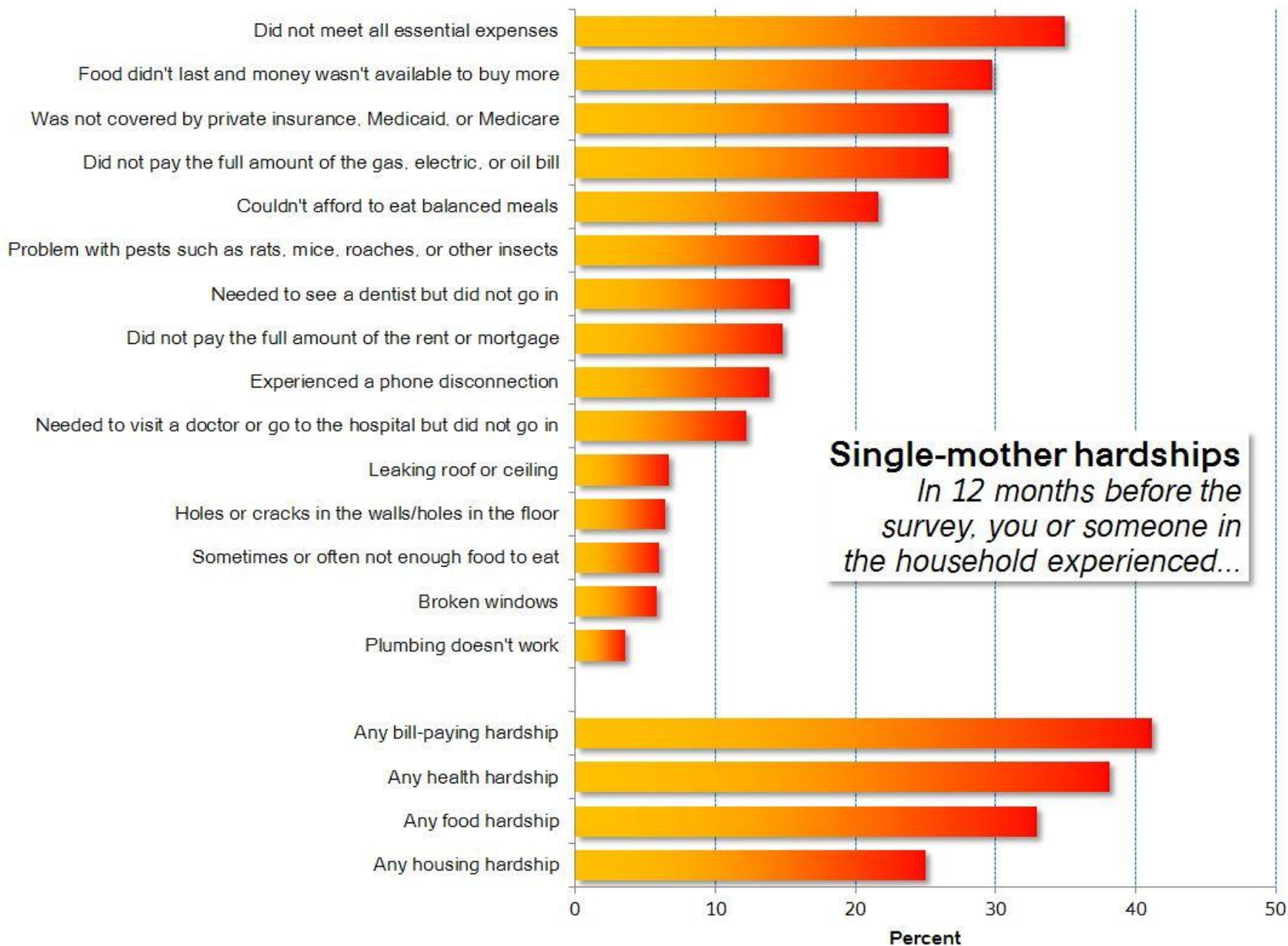


***Family structure and poverty status when they were age 14-18***

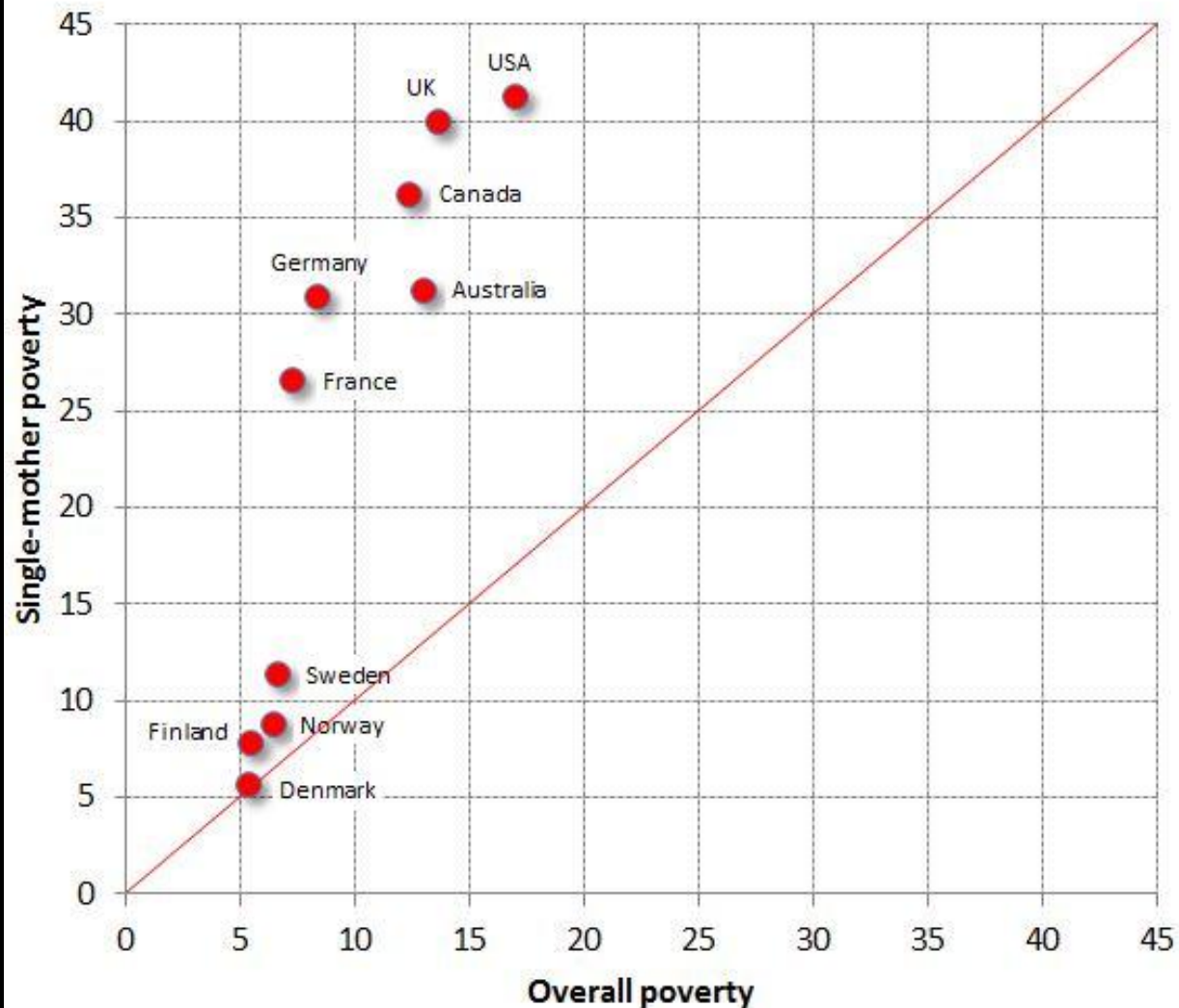
# Median weekly earnings of full-time workers

*by sex and education, 2012*





## Poverty for single mothers and overall poverty in 10 countries



Brady & Burroway, *Demography* 2012 (poverty = below half the median)

# Conclusions

- Wouldn't they be better off married?
  - Or, Why aren't they better off single?
  - And, Who are they supposed to marry?
- We don't know the best level of marriage
  - Without gender equality and a solid floor
- Reducing the risks from non-marriage might seem implausible, but not compared with changing family structure