

A photograph of a cardboard sign with the words "INEQUALITY HURTS ALL OF US" written in green, hand-painted capital letters. The sign is slightly tilted and appears to be part of a protest or demonstration. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some blurred lights and a person in the distance.

INEQUALITY
HURTS
ALL OF US

Inequality – patients, lifestyle and planet

Life Med

Dr Matt Sawyer

Sept 2025



Which
gender is the
best at
playing the
piano?



Which gender wins the most piano competitions?

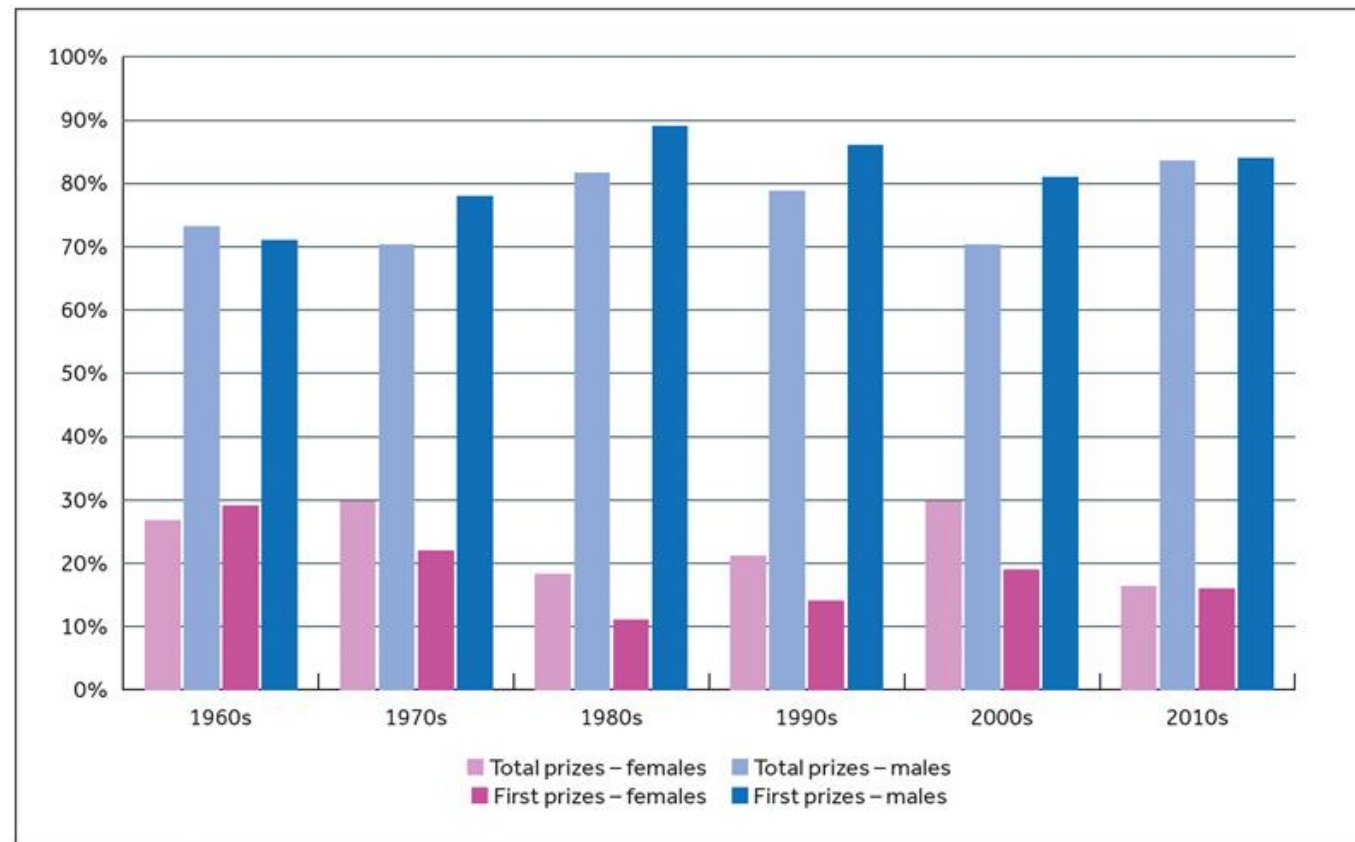


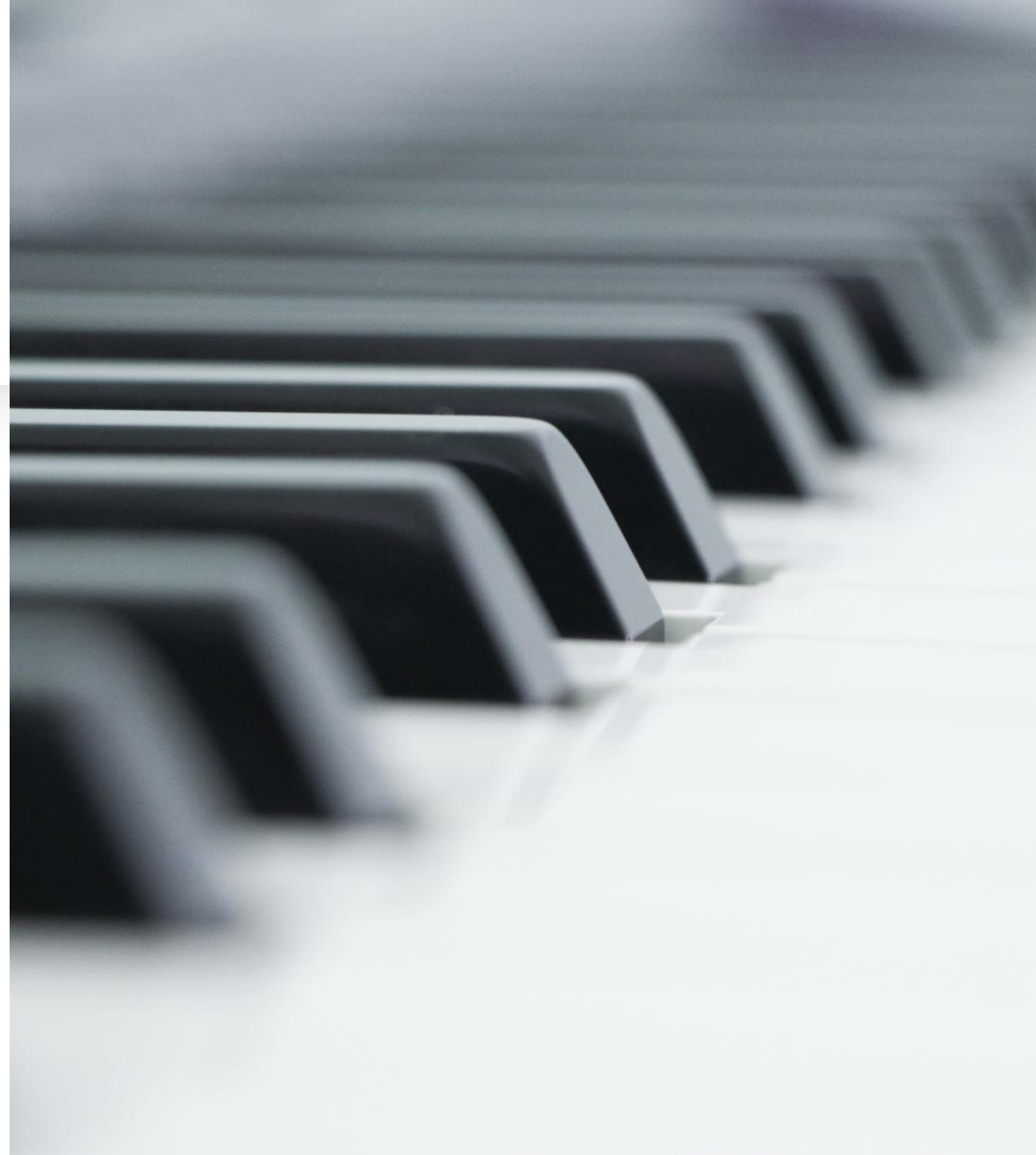
Figure 2: Proportion of female prize winners by decade across 13 major piano competitions

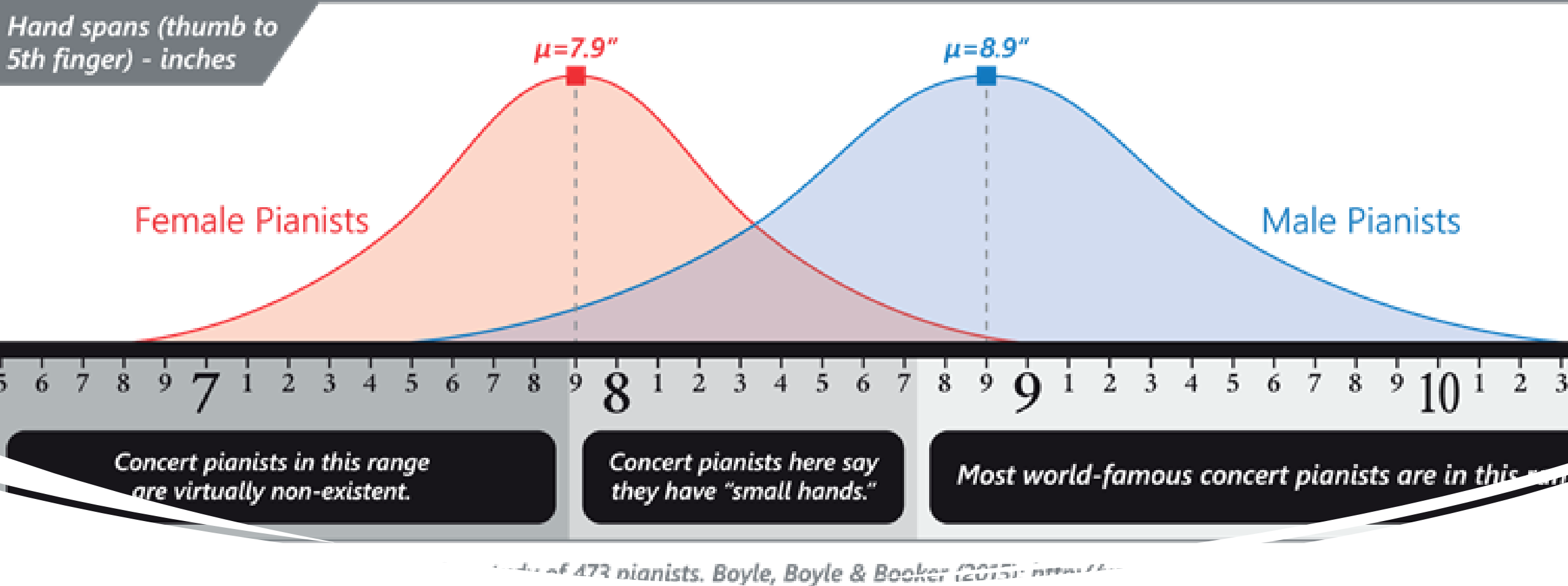
Based on prize winner data compiled here: paskpiano.org/gender-differences-in-major-competitions-and-performing-careers

So, why do men dominate piano prizes?

Is it...

- What are the most important factors?
- Age when started?
- Number of hours practiced?
- Quality of tutor?
- Natural talent?





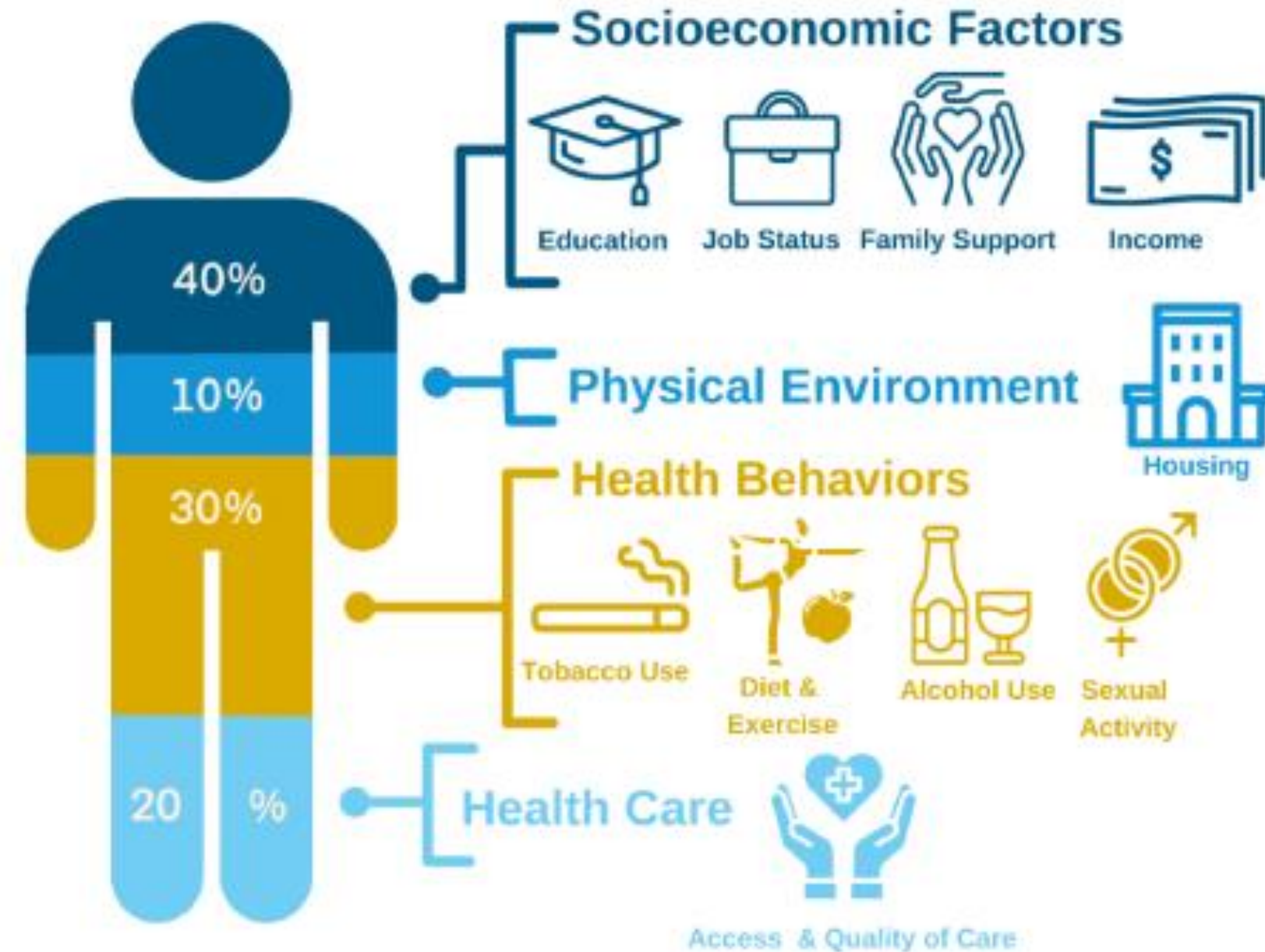
Size of hands is
crucial to be a
concert pianist

- Avoidable – can change size of piano
- Unfair – can't change hand size
- Systematic – applies to (almost) all piano competitions

What are health inequalities?

Health inequalities are **avoidable, unfair** and **systematic** differences in health between different groups of people.





What determines ‘good’ health?

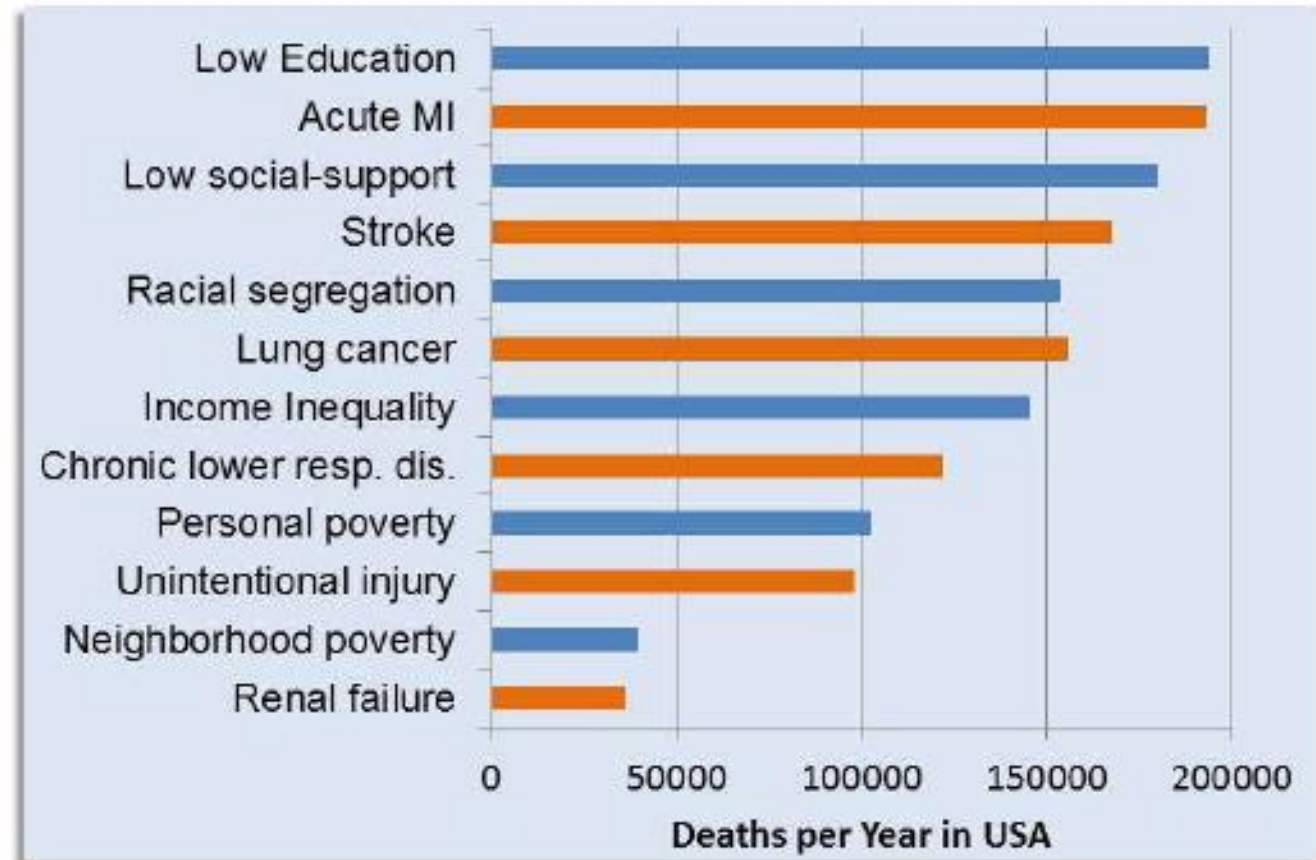
Not **just** the absence of disease...

Where do inequalities exist?

- socio-economic factors (for example, income);
- geography (for example, region);
- specific characteristics (for example, ethnicity or sexuality); and
- socially excluded groups (for example, people who are seeking asylum or experiencing homelessness)

How important
are they?

Deaths Attributable to Social Factors Compared to “Causes” of Death



Mailman School of Public Health
Department of Epidemiology
Social Epidemiology Cluster

Data from:

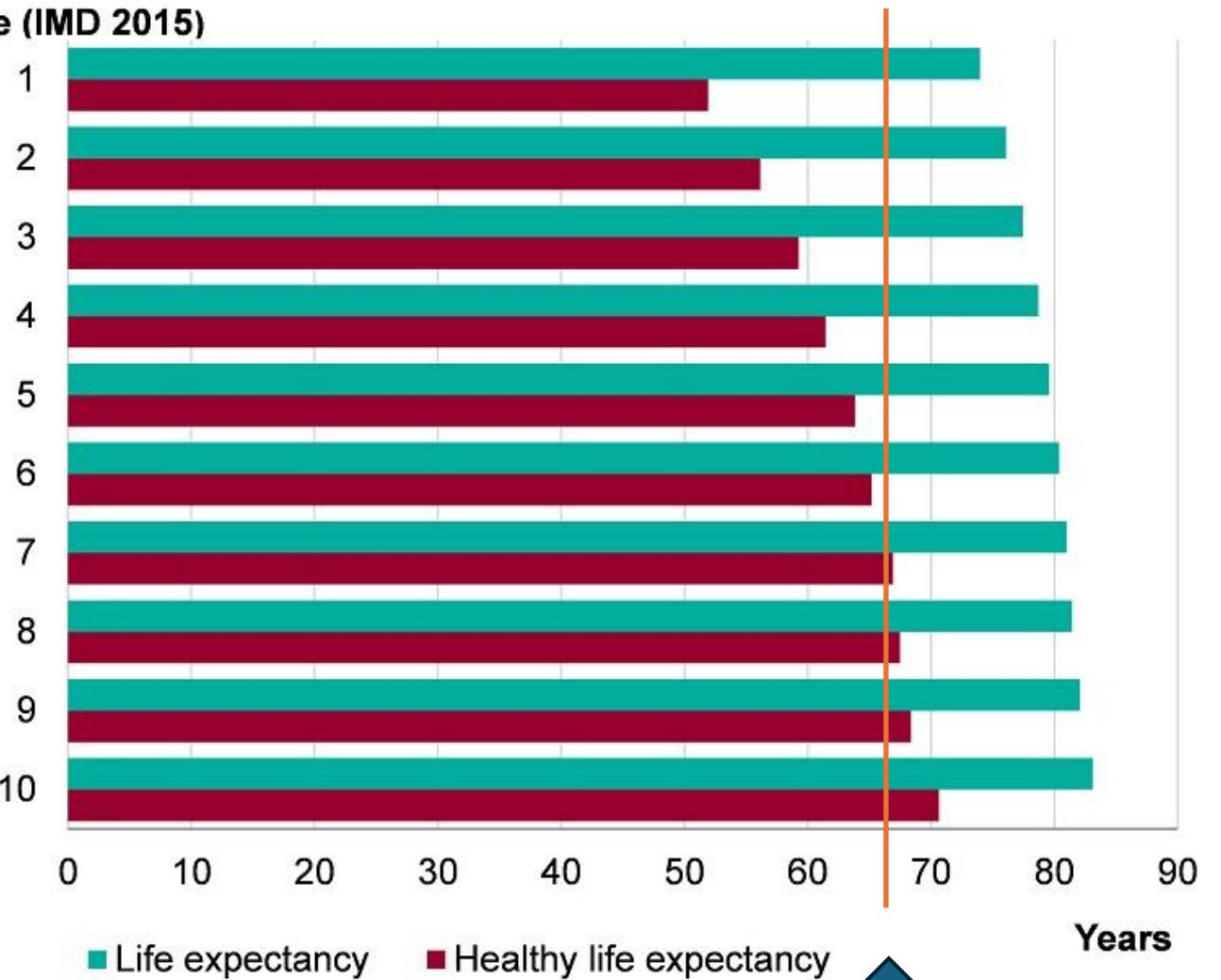
Galea, S. et al. *Am J Public Health* 2011; 101: 1456-1465
Minino, A. et al. *Natl Vital Stat Rep.* 2002; 50: 1-120.

Male life expectancy and healthy life expectancy at birth by deprivation decile, England, 2013 to 2015

Deprivation decile (IMD 2015)

Most deprived

Least deprived



State pension age

Life expectancy and deprivation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-profile-for-england/chapter-5-inequality-in-health>

Are we getting better?

Comparing the original Marmot report (2010) with the '10 years on' review (2020), it found

- The **more deprived the area, the shorter the life expectancy**.
- This social gradient has become **steeper** over the last decade.
- Women in the most deprived 10% of areas for whom life expectancy **fell** from 2010-12 and 2016-18.
- Child poverty has **increased**.
- People have **insufficient money** to lead a healthy life.
- More ignored communities with poor conditions and little reason for hope. Mortality rates are increasing for men and women aged 45-49 – perhaps related to so-called 'deaths of despair' (suicide, drugs and alcohol abuse).

What can we do?

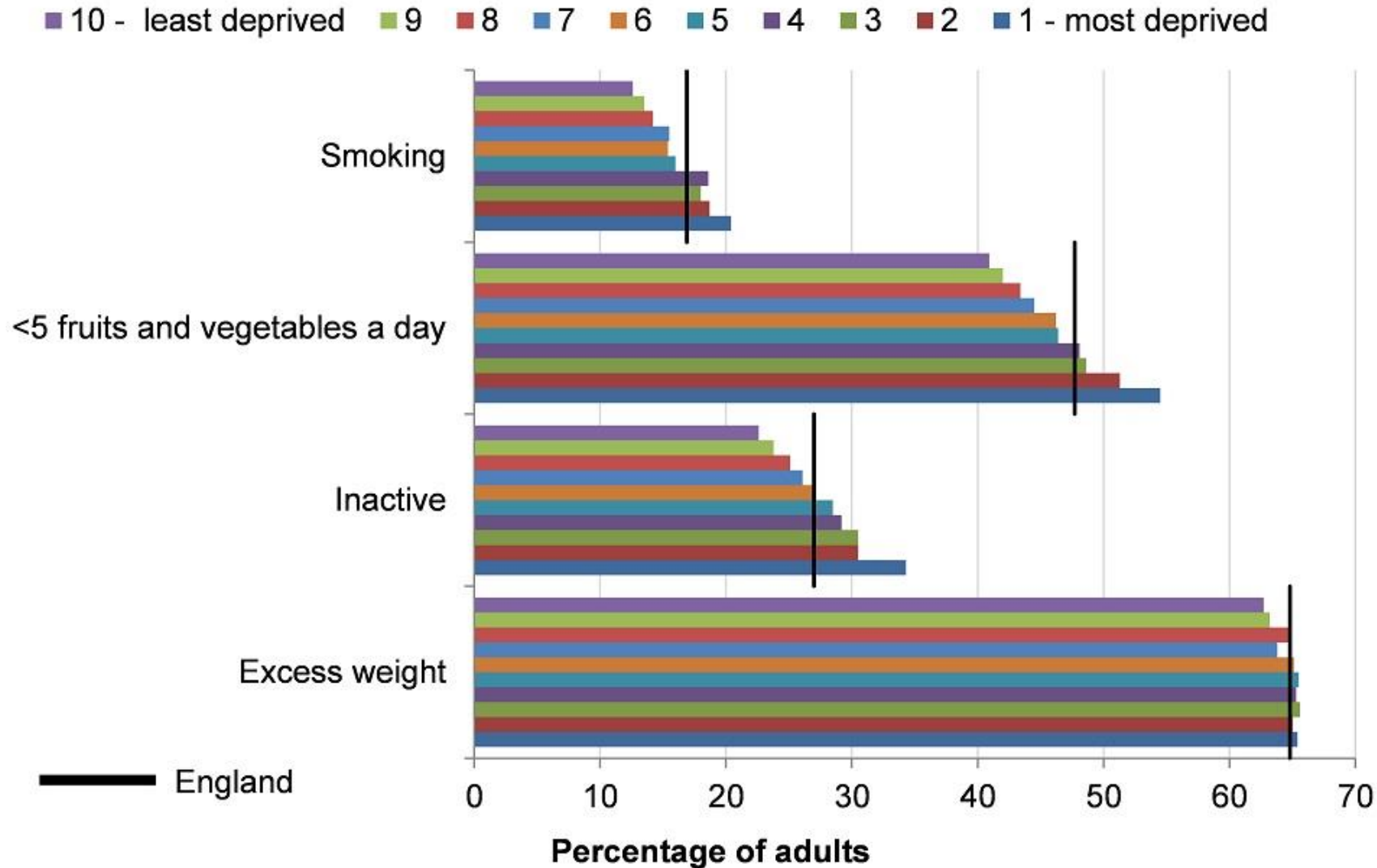
Five policy areas – recommendations from Marmot

- giving **every** child the best start in life
- enabling **all** people to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- ensuring a healthy **standard of living** for all
- creating **fair employment** and good work for all
- creating and developing **healthy and sustainable places** and communities.

Inequality and lifestyle factors



Lifestyle factors and deprivation



The prevalence of selected risk factors in adults by deprivation decile, England

‘Be more active and walk more’




Who recommends this to their patients?

BUT

- How safe do **you** feel walking?
 - At all times of the day (and night)?
- How safe do your patients feel?
- Your parents?
- Your children?
- What would happen if you were 30 years younger... or older?
- Would anything change if your skin colour was different?
- If you were a different sex? Or a different religion?

Systemic factors



People living in deprived areas are disproportionately affected by the cost of car dependence and by the impacts of having to live, work and walk next to busy, dangerous, noisy and polluted streets.

In rural areas, transport poverty is experienced through poor access to public transport services.

- Accessibility
 - Wheelchairs and prams
 - Mobility issues, mobility scooters
 - Luggage
 - Sight problems
 - Confidence
- Quality
 - Cracked, uneven pavements – trip hazard
 - Lack of space e.g. narrow, car parking, clutter
 - Crossing facilities
 - Dropped kerbs

Pedestrian casualties - Who is most at risk?



(Highest casualty rate per 100,000)

Effect of deprivation on casualty rate

	White	Ethnic minority
Non-deprived area	20	24
Deprived area	48	62

Risk **increases** with

- exposure
- time a person spends walking and
- their access to other modes of transport

Jogging

PC catches 'icky' catcallers on undercover jogs



Police officers volunteer to take part in runs as part of a crackdown on harassment

A survey by Runner's World magazine which found 60% of female runners **had experienced harassment**, largely from men in cars.

Female police officers pose as runners in Bradford in catcalling crackdown

6 March 2024

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz0y8r141pxo>

An open door?

National Attitudes Survey data, which showed that people would walk more **if** they had

- well-maintained pavements (74%),
- safer roads (45%),
- more and safer crossings (44%) and
- direct walking routes (43%).





Personally

- Commit to not park on **any** pavement

With the practice/workplace

- Test the route with a pram or mobility or sight impairments.
- Get staff and patients involved.

In the community

- Park run practice – RCGP sign up - <https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/view.php?id=723>
- Sign up to 'Walk with a doc' scheme - <https://walkwithadoc.org/>

In the wider society

- Comment on local plans e.g. new housing schemes – Ask has pedestrian design been included?

What can we do?

Healthy eating – what do we know?



Personal Health

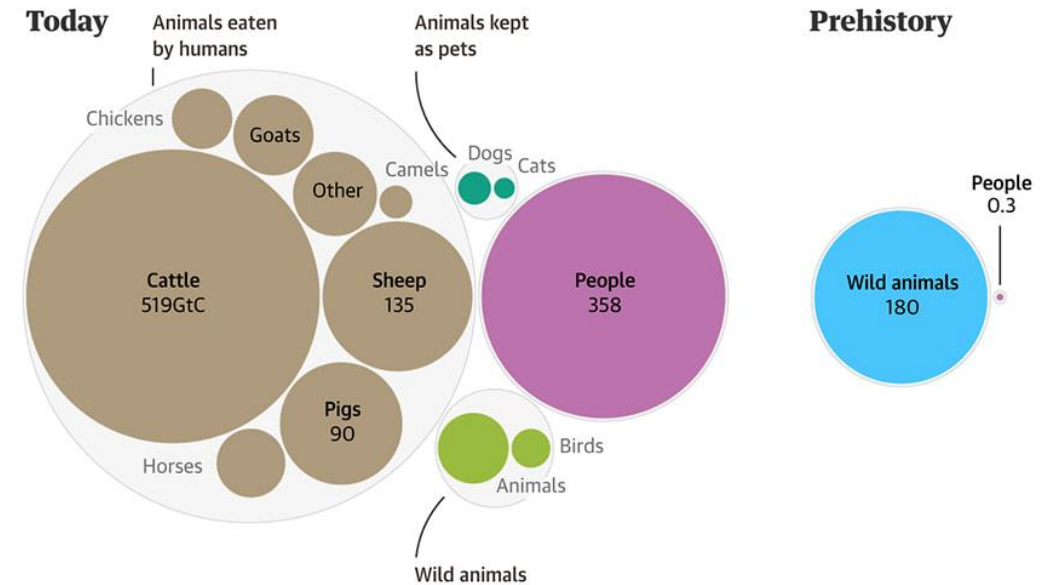
- Plants are good
- 5 (or 10?) a day
- (Ultra) processed food isn't good
- (Processed) meat isn't good

Planetary Health

- Plants are good
- Farmed animals aren't

The global mass of farm animals is now 22 times the weight of all wild animals

Terrestrial-vertebrate-weight, gigatonnes of carbon



Guardian graphic. Source: National Food Strategy analysis based on: Bar-On, Y. M., Phillips, R., & Milo, R. (2018). The biomass distribution on Earth, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

Why doesn't telling people to 'eat healthy' work?

Many, many factors.

This section focuses on

- Affordability, storage, cooking options
- Planning ahead and preparation
- Accessibility



Affordability

How much does it cost to eat healthily per person **per day**?

(Based on Eatwell Guide)

£9

How much do the poorest 10% currently spend on food?

£4.04

- 13.6% of households are currently affected by food insecurity (where they are skipping meals, not eating etc)
- Higher amongst vulnerable groups including disabled people and those with mental health conditions.
- Calorie-for-calorie healthy food is, on average, more expensive than unhealthy food.

I went shopping at Iceland and found this:

More info at
www.healthystart.nhs.uk/



Planning ahead and prep for a week

Meal Prep For The Week In 1 Day



Makes life
easier
doesn't it?

Planning ahead

BUT

- 1.9 million people living without a cooker (1 in 20 earning under £35,000 a year)
- 2.8 million people living without a freezer (1 in 10)
- 900,000 people living without a fridge (1 in 30)



Cost of living without appliances

The poverty premium

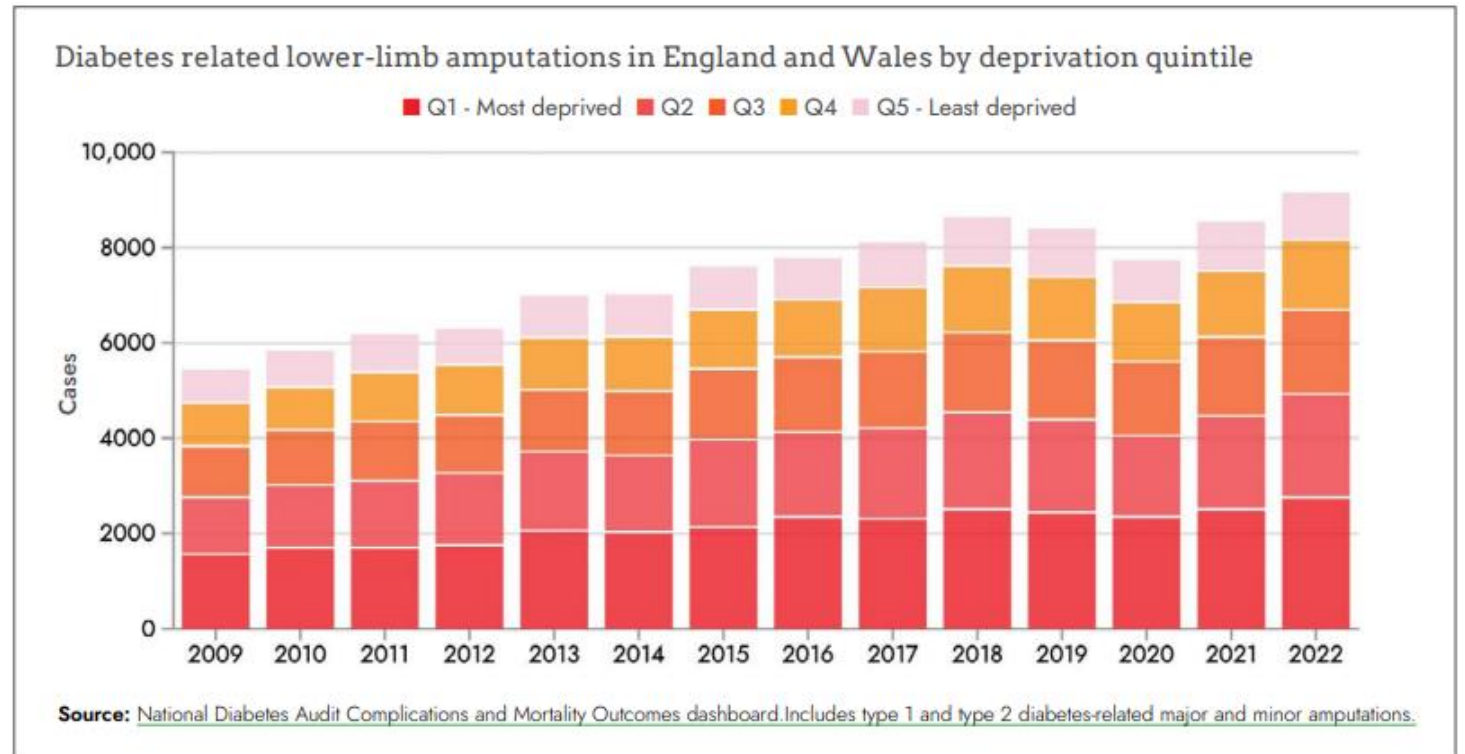
- “It means I can’t buy cheap food, I can’t cook and freeze food, I can’t buy frozen food, I can’t buy discounted food and freeze it”

	Take-away	Ready-meal	Fresh
Spaghetti Bolognese	£9.50	£3.00	£1.20
Pizza	£9.00	£3.00	£1.90
Chicken curry	£8.75	£3.00	£1.50

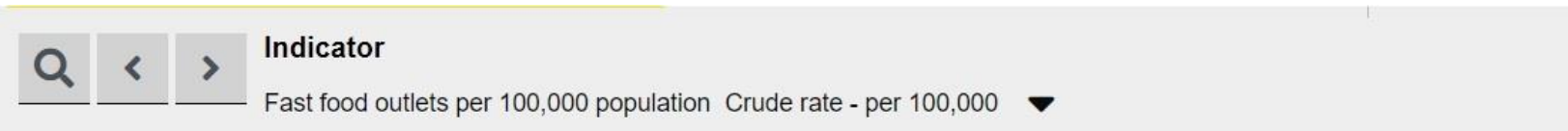
IDDM and fridges

“Not having a fridge for my insulin and not having enough money to have a healthy diet to control my diabetes”

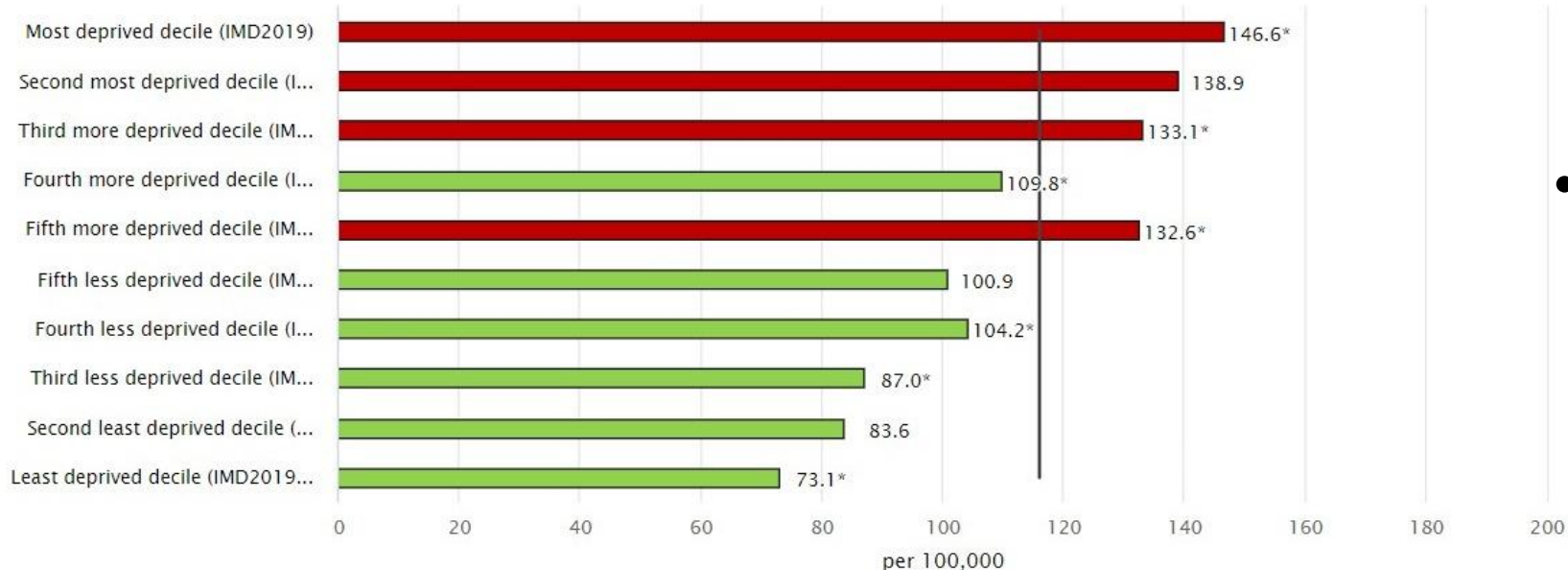
How many of your practices patients on insulin do **not** have a fridge?



Accessibility – fast food and deprivation



2024



- People who live in more deprived areas are **more** likely to live in neighbourhoods with a **higher** concentration of fast food outlets.
- People from minority ethnic groups are more likely to live in neighbourhoods with a higher concentration of fast food outlets.



The Four Pillars of Food Insecurity...
...by Dominic Watters, Kent

'We live in the most deprived blocks of this council estate, where our access to nutrition is overlooked.'



'The shop on the estate only sells the lowest quality of ultra-processed food, making this a food desert in the Garden of England.'



'This is what fuel poverty looks like – regularly we don't have enough gas or electric to cook with raw ingredients.'



'This is where the bus never shows up. It's hard to make it out of here.'



How can we help?

