

Looking up at the rich:
exploring public attitudes
to high incomes

SPA conference

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Lincoln University

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Bamfield and Horton (2009)

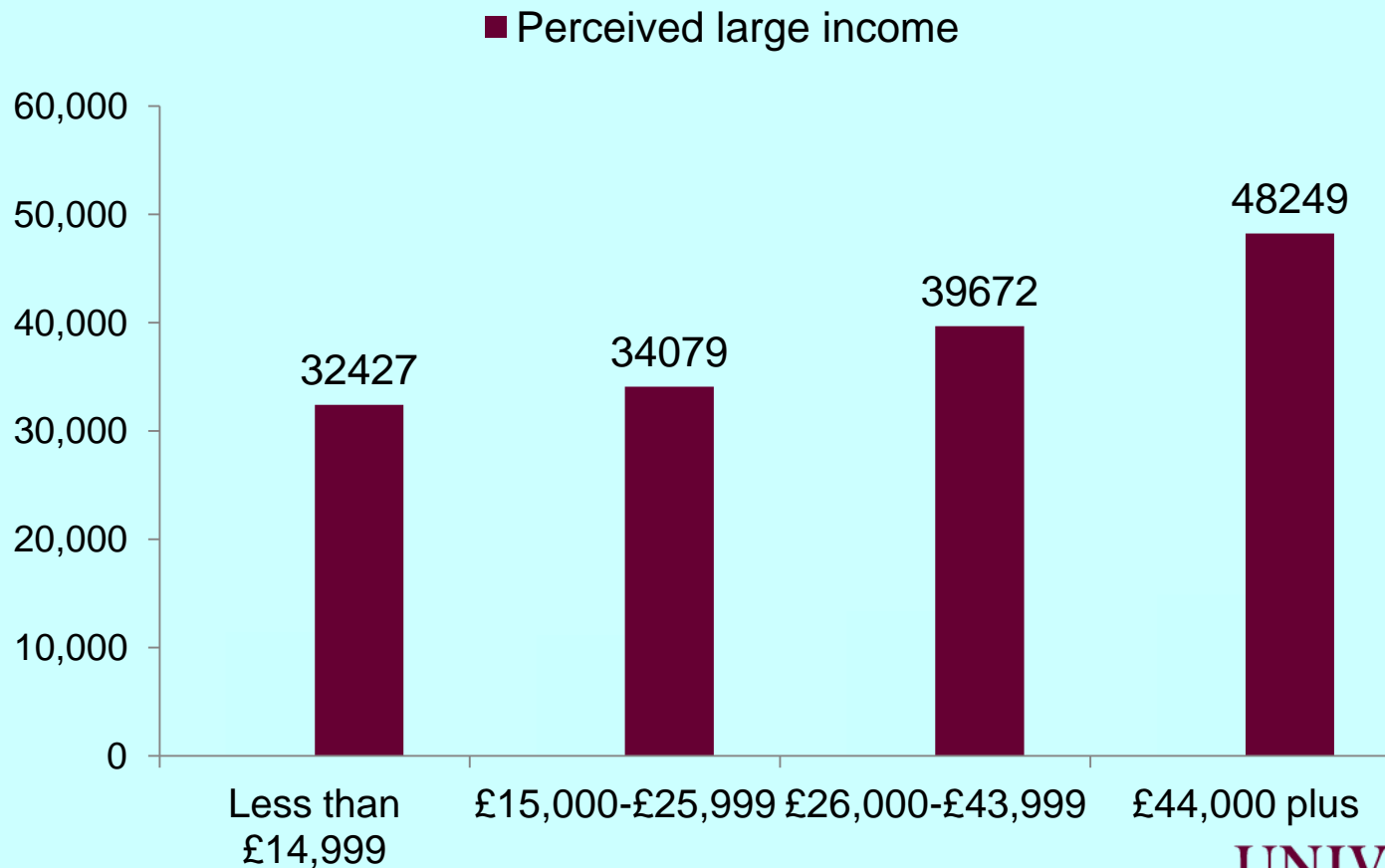
Understanding attitudes to tackling economic inequality, York: JRF

- 75% think those earning £100K+ are overpaid
- But high pay generally seen as reflecting hard work and effort – ‘fair inequality’ – with widespread belief in opportunities for advancement
- Distinction between rich and super rich
- Undeserving rich not individually blamed
- But financial crisis may affect attitudes

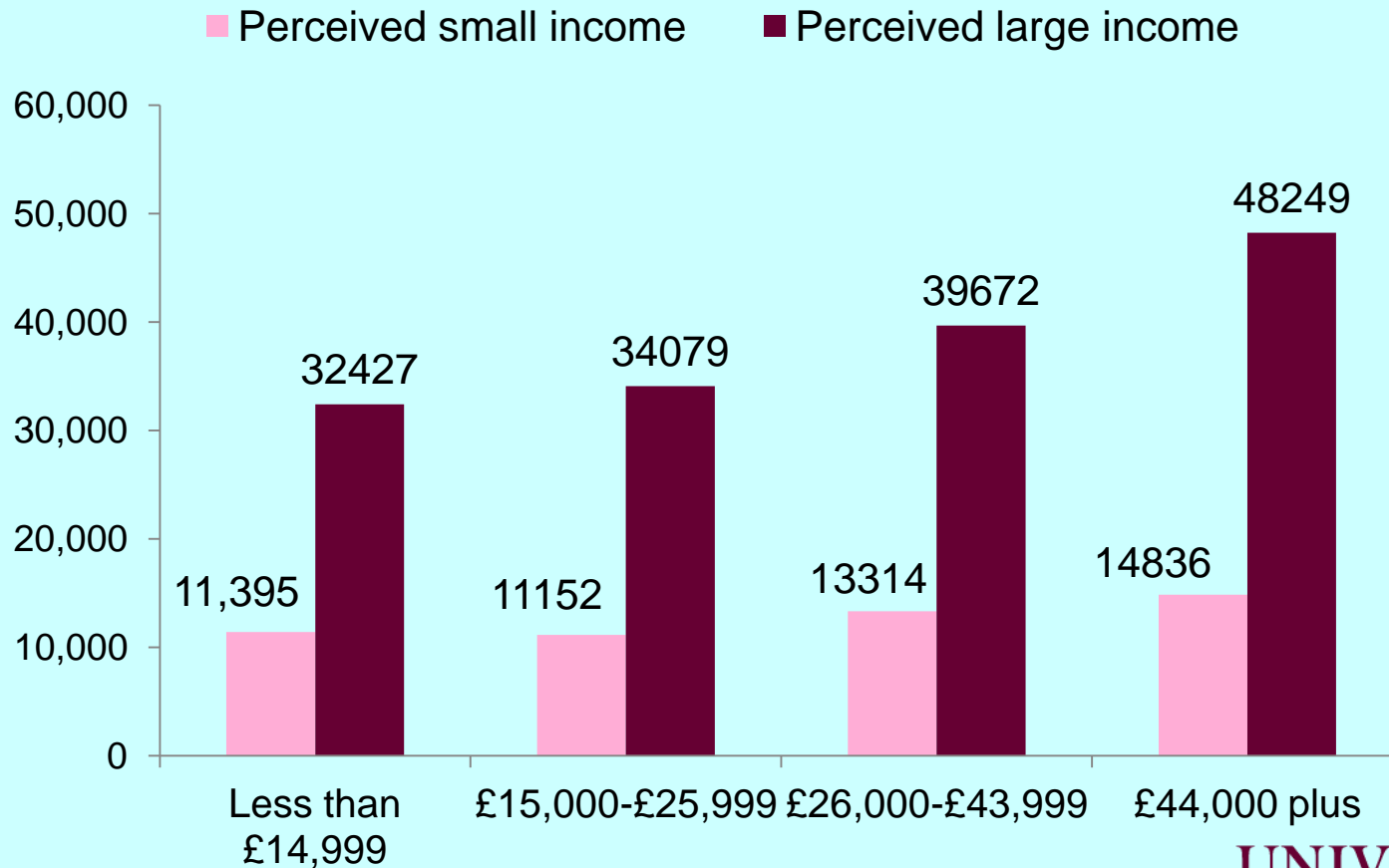
69% agreed that ...

There is enough opportunity for virtually everyone to get on in life if they really want to. It comes down to the individual and how much you are motivated.'

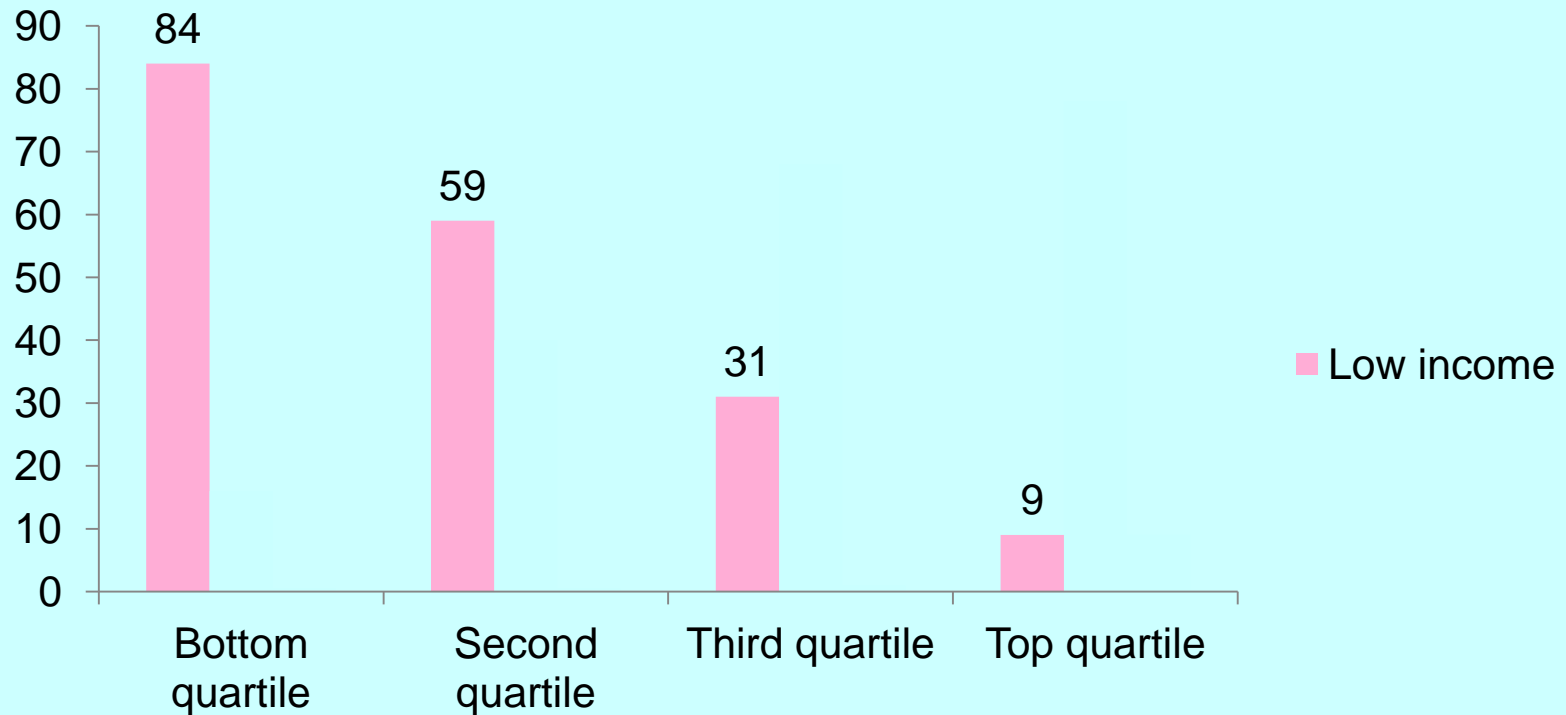
Perceptions of high income by household income quartiles



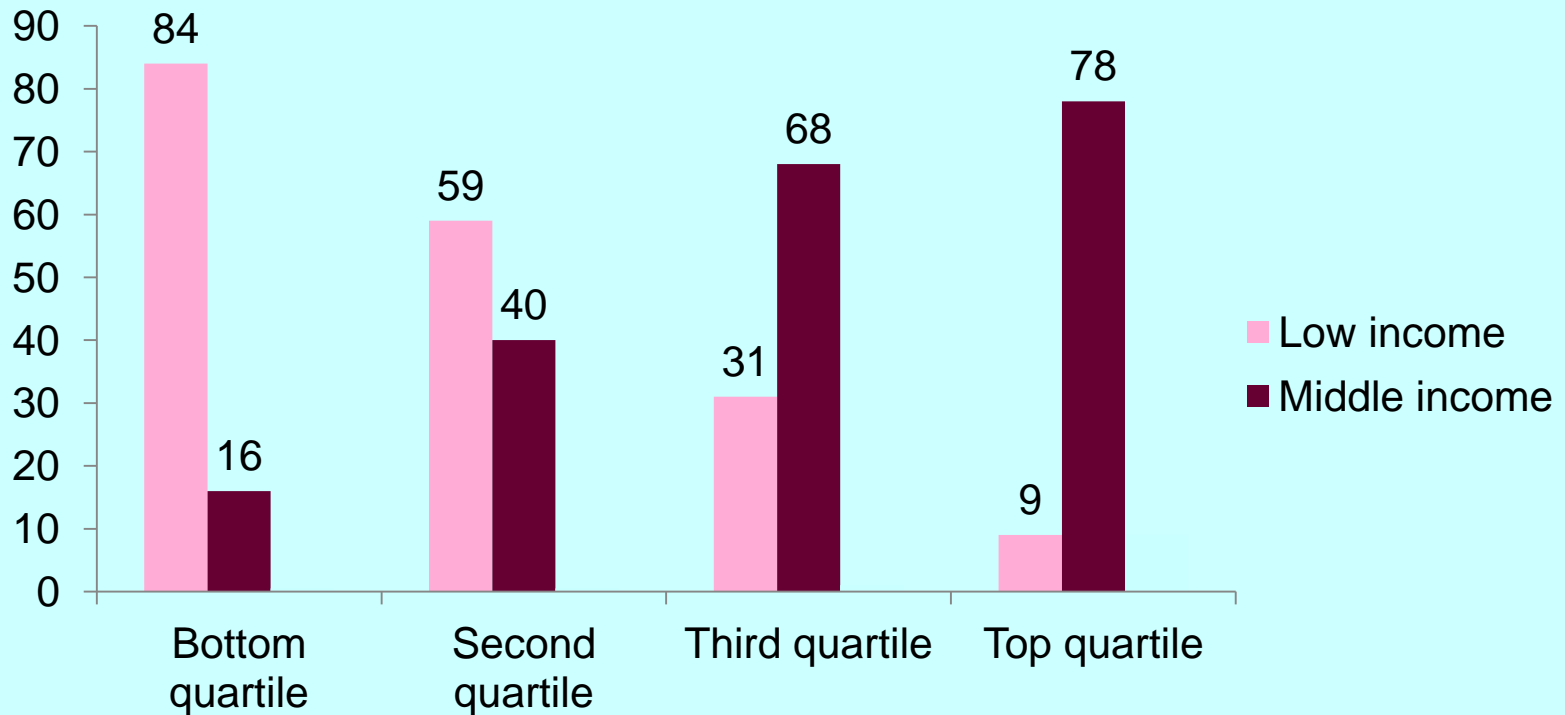
Perceptions of low and high incomes by household income quartiles



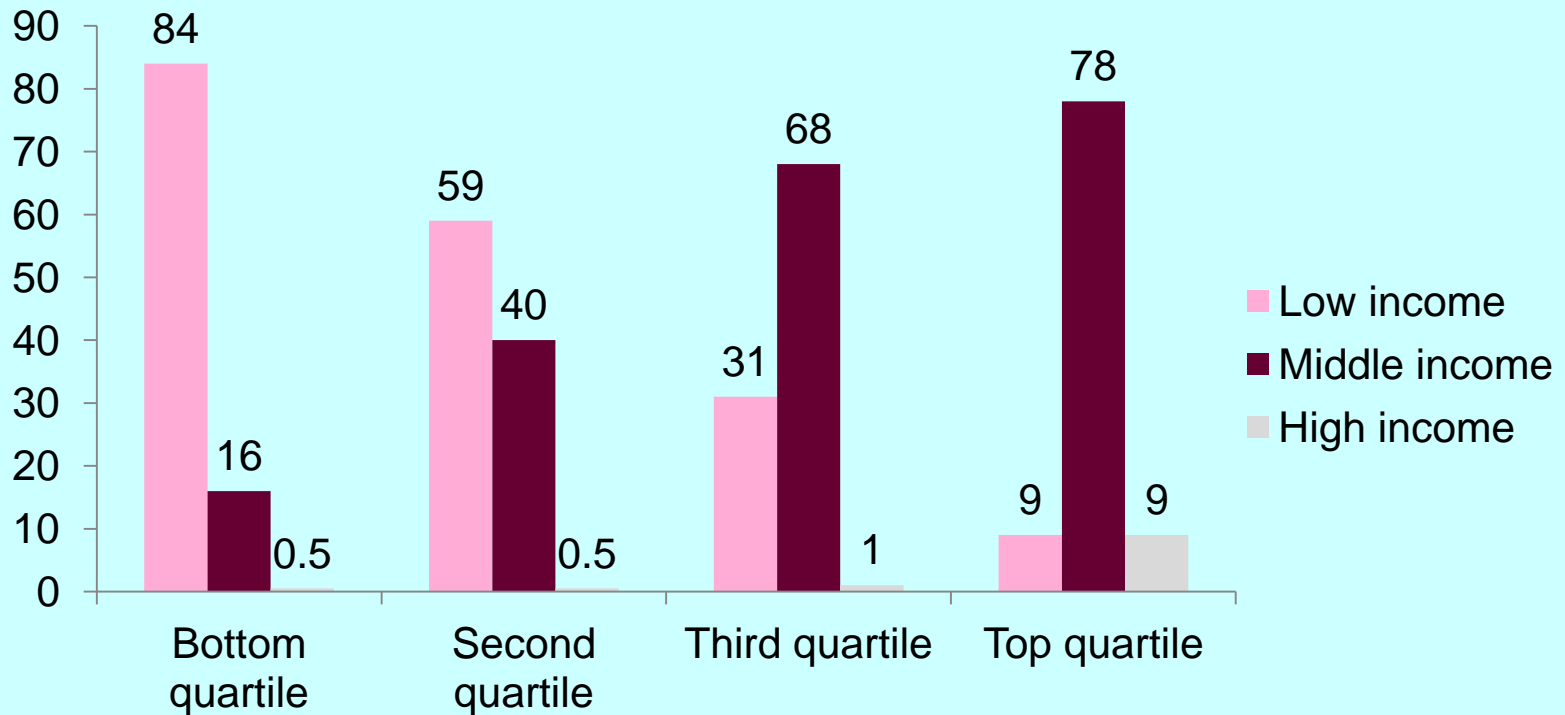
Perception of whether on a low, middle or high income by income quartiles



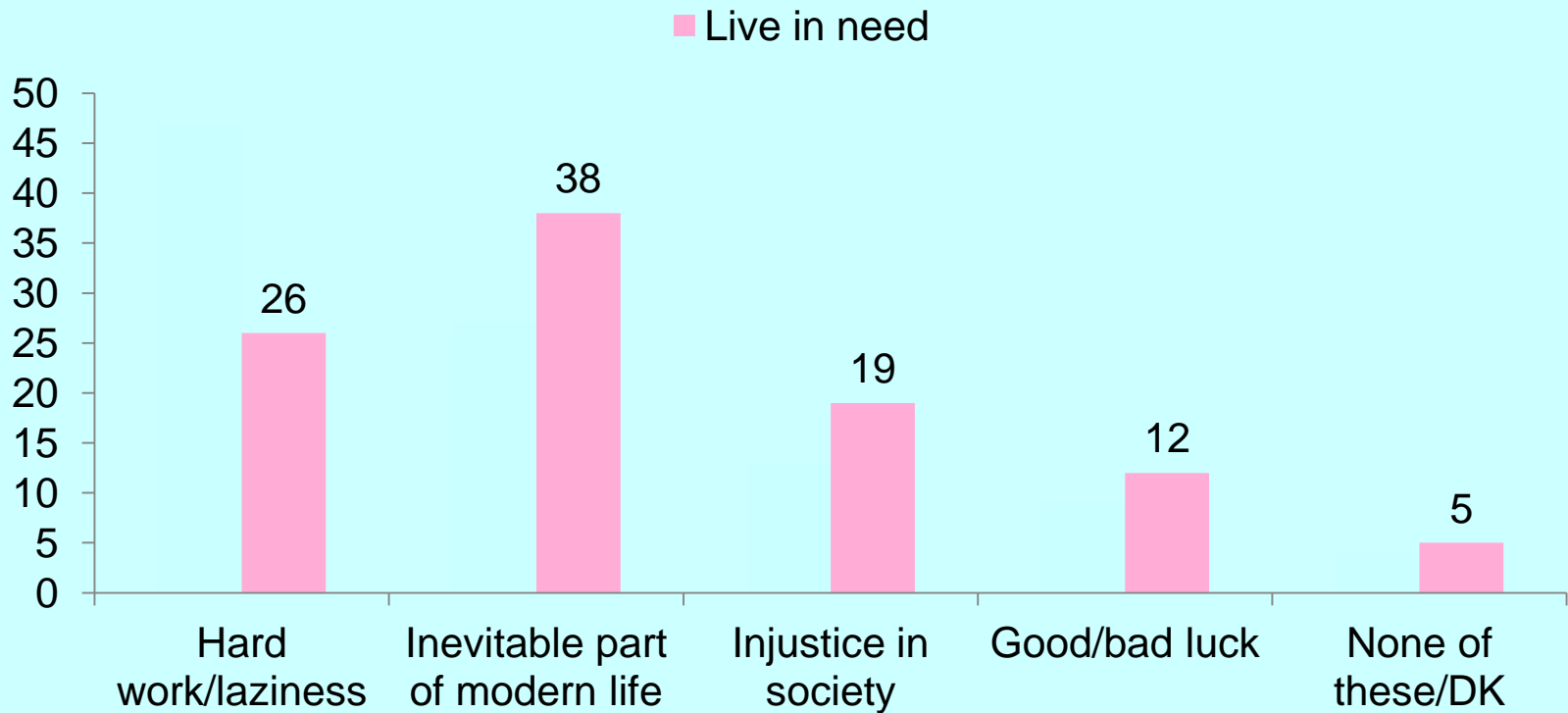
Perception of whether on a low, middle or high income by income quartiles



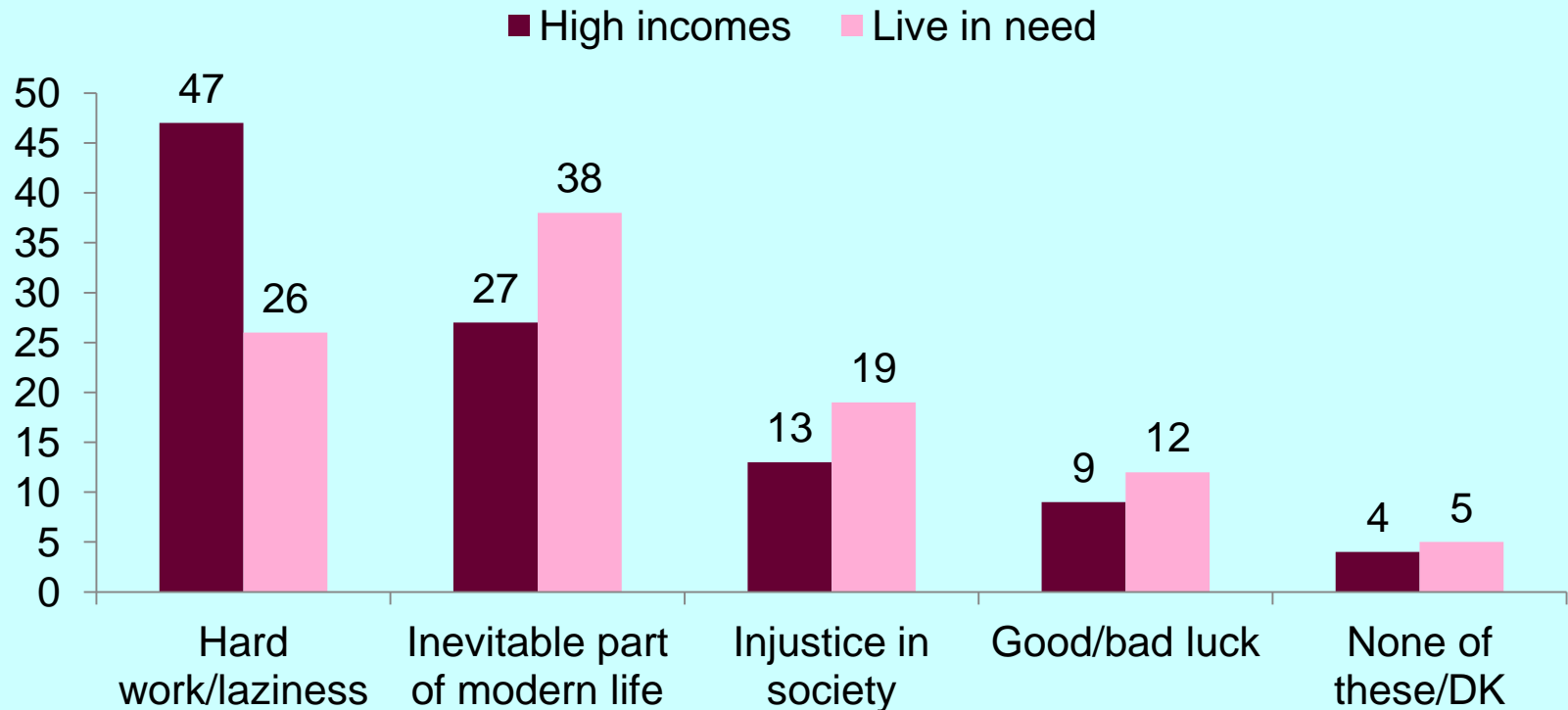
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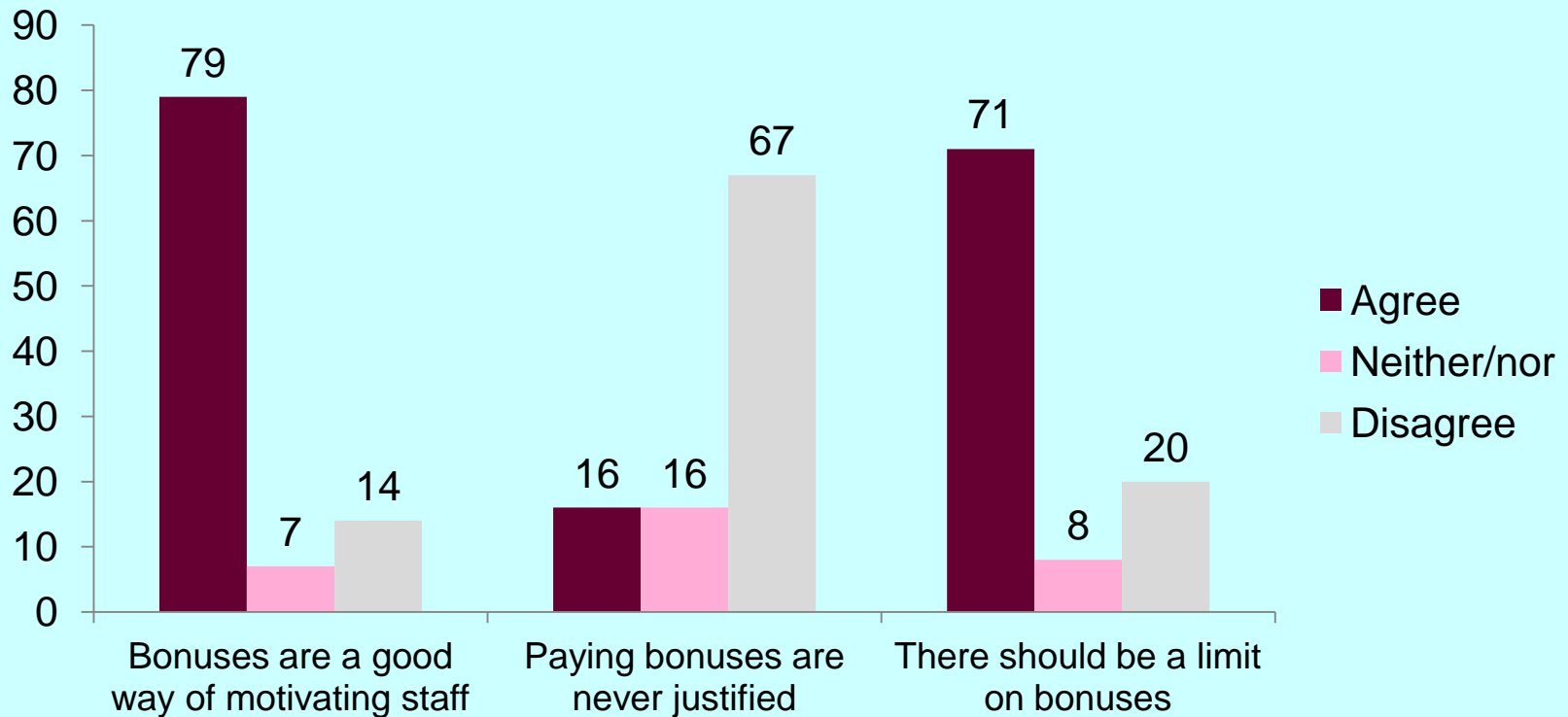
Why do people live in need



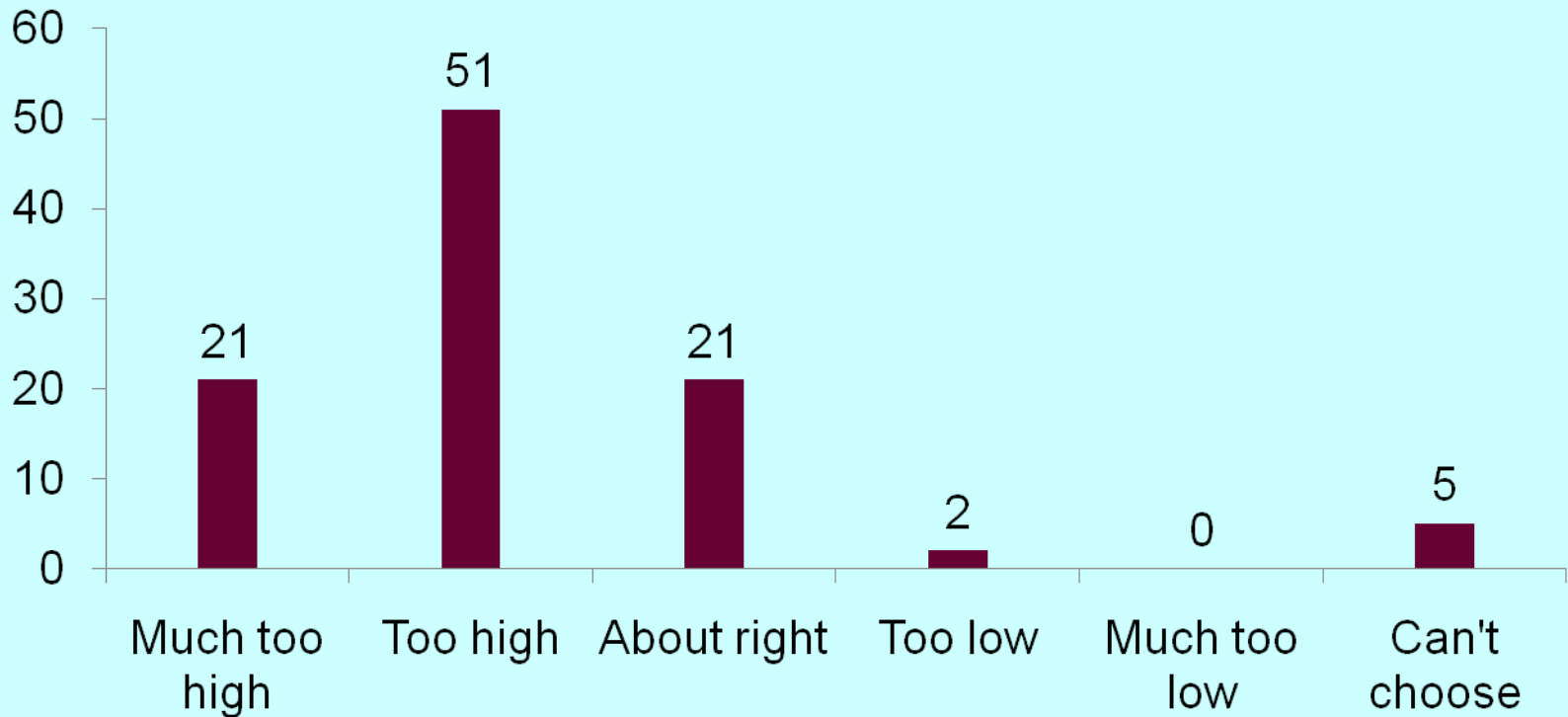
Why do people have high incomes/live in need



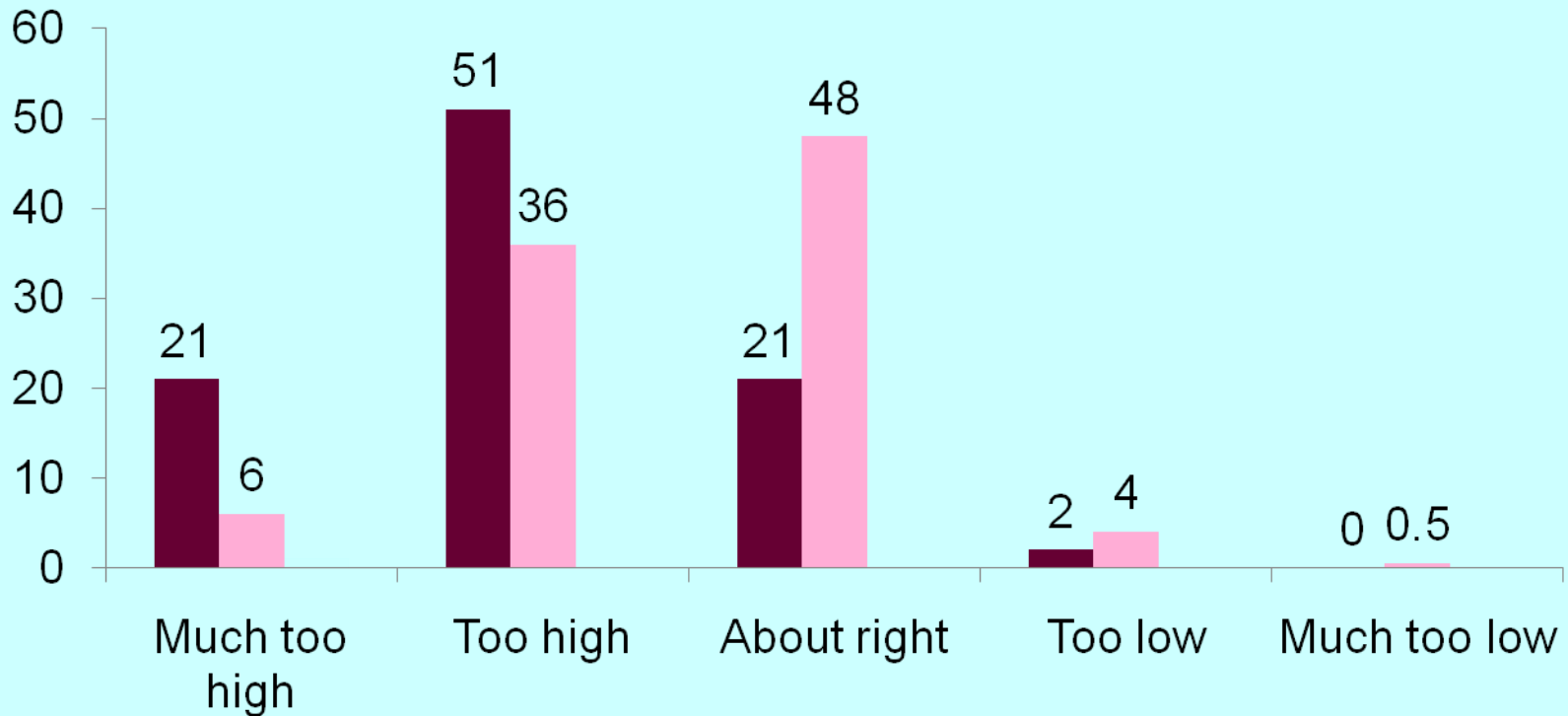
Attitudes to bonuses



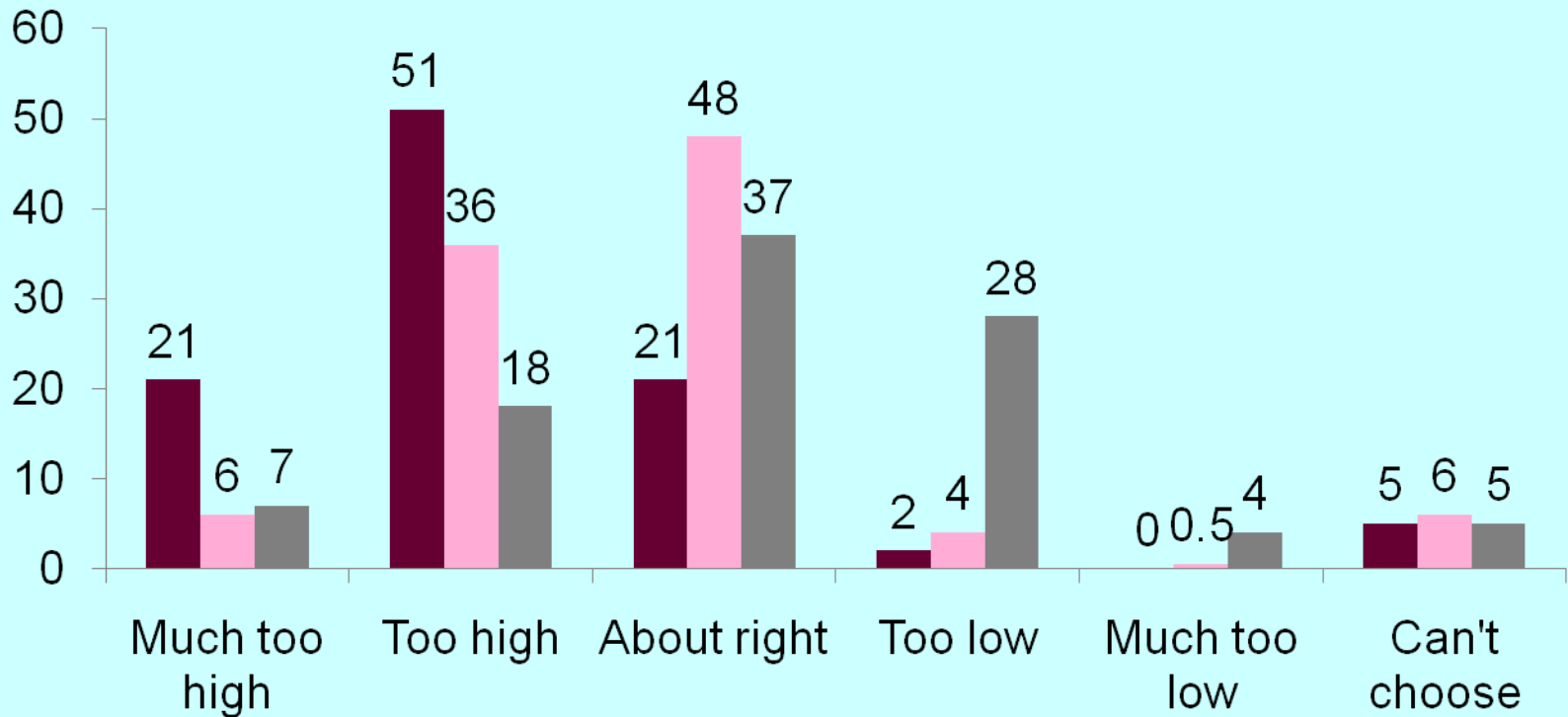
Views about how those on *low incomes* are taxed



Views about how those on *low/middle* incomes are taxed



Views about how those on *low/middle/high* incomes are taxed



Equal opportunities?

- 80% agree that children from better-off families have many more opportunities than people from less well-off families
- 68% agree that some people have higher incomes from others because they are born to rich parents and have advantages from the start
- 62% agree there can never be equal opportunities in a society where some people have higher incomes than others
- 27% agree that people in Britain today have similar opportunities regardless of their income

- Karen Rowlingson, Michael Orton and Eleanor Taylor (2010) *Do we still care about inequality?*, BSA report
- Paper available on attitudes to high incomes on request from k.rowlingson@bham.ac.uk