



Neighbourhoods & Health: An Introduction

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The Social Gradient in Health

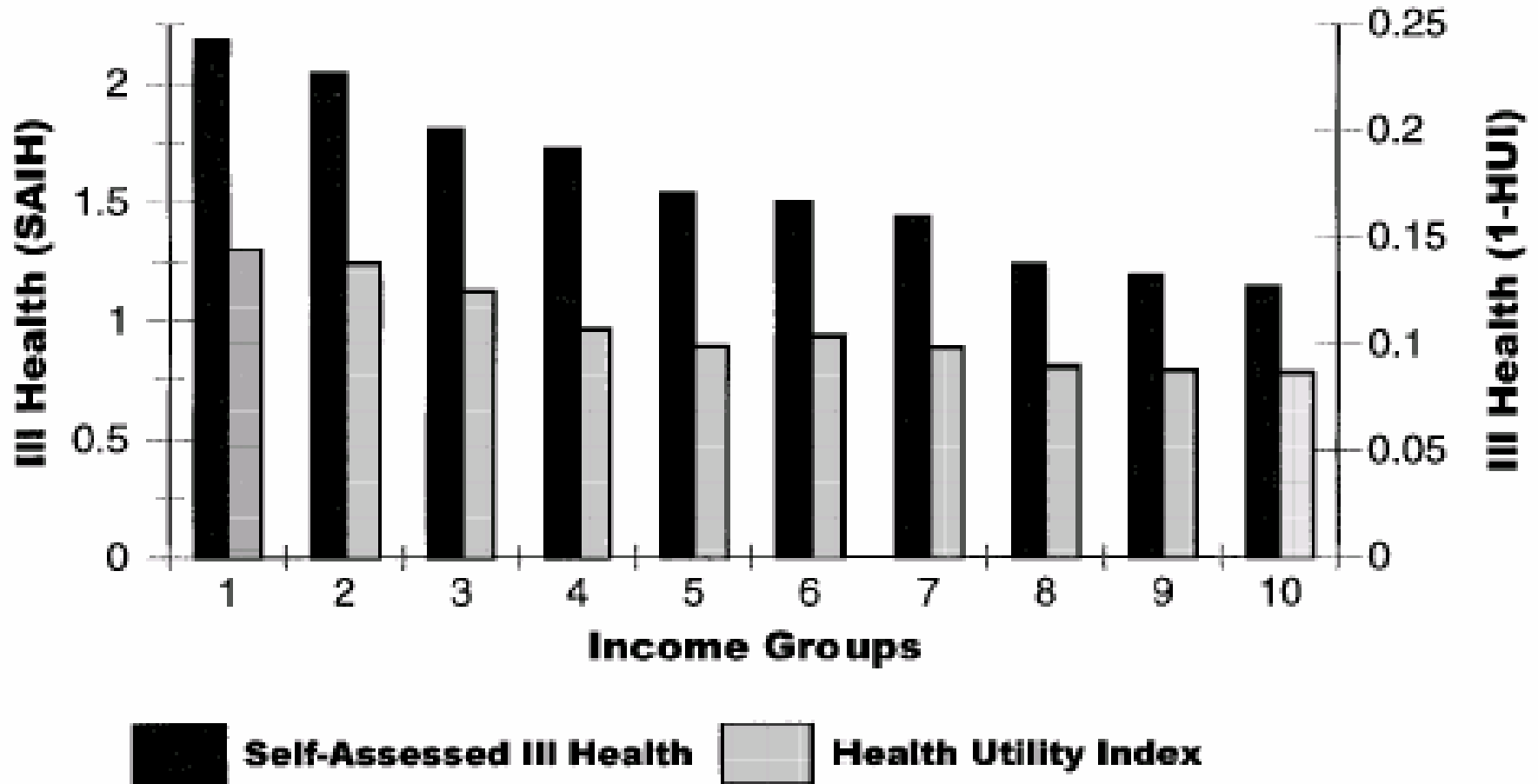


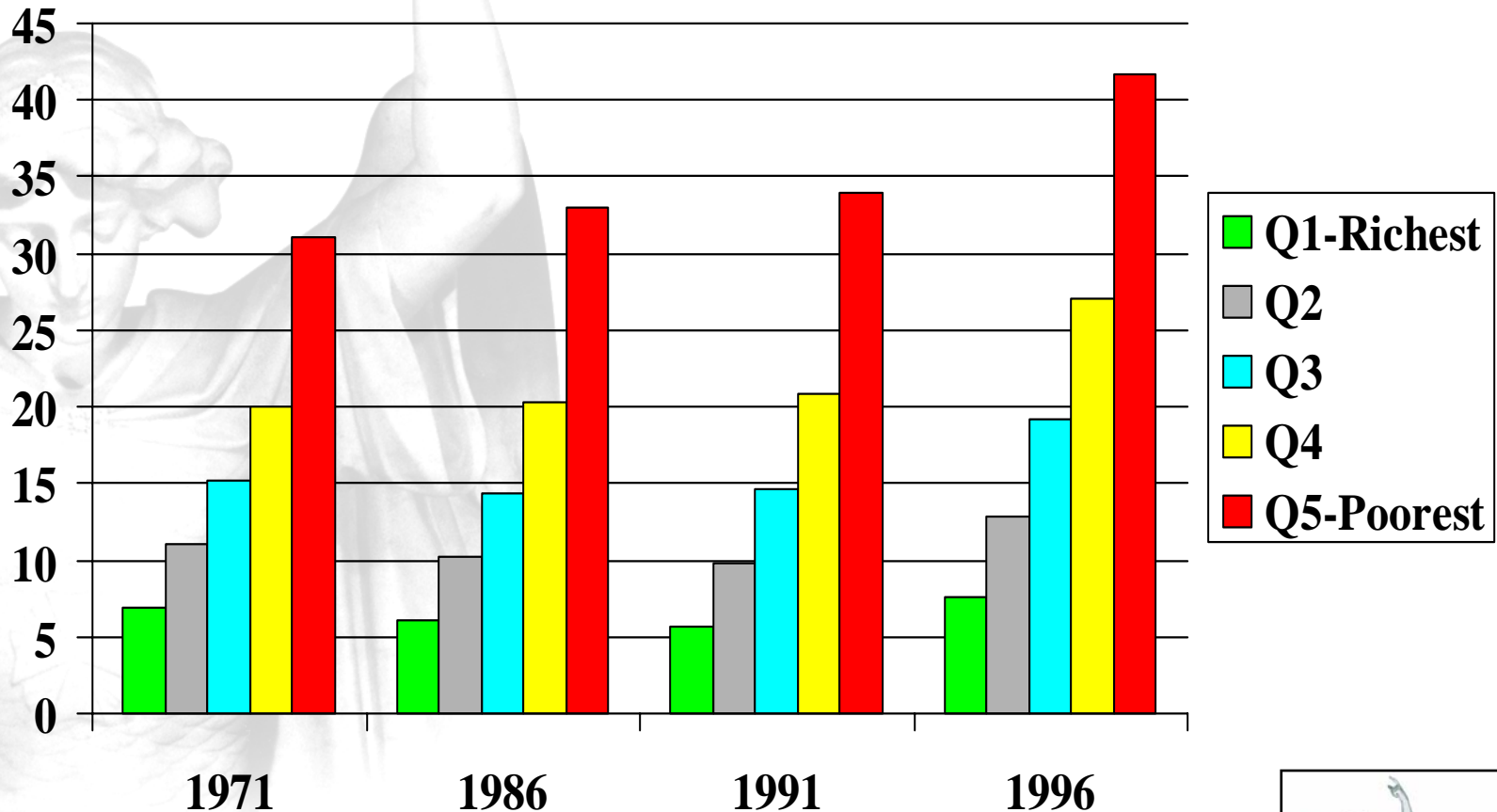
Fig. 2. Ill-health by income.

Income and Social Status

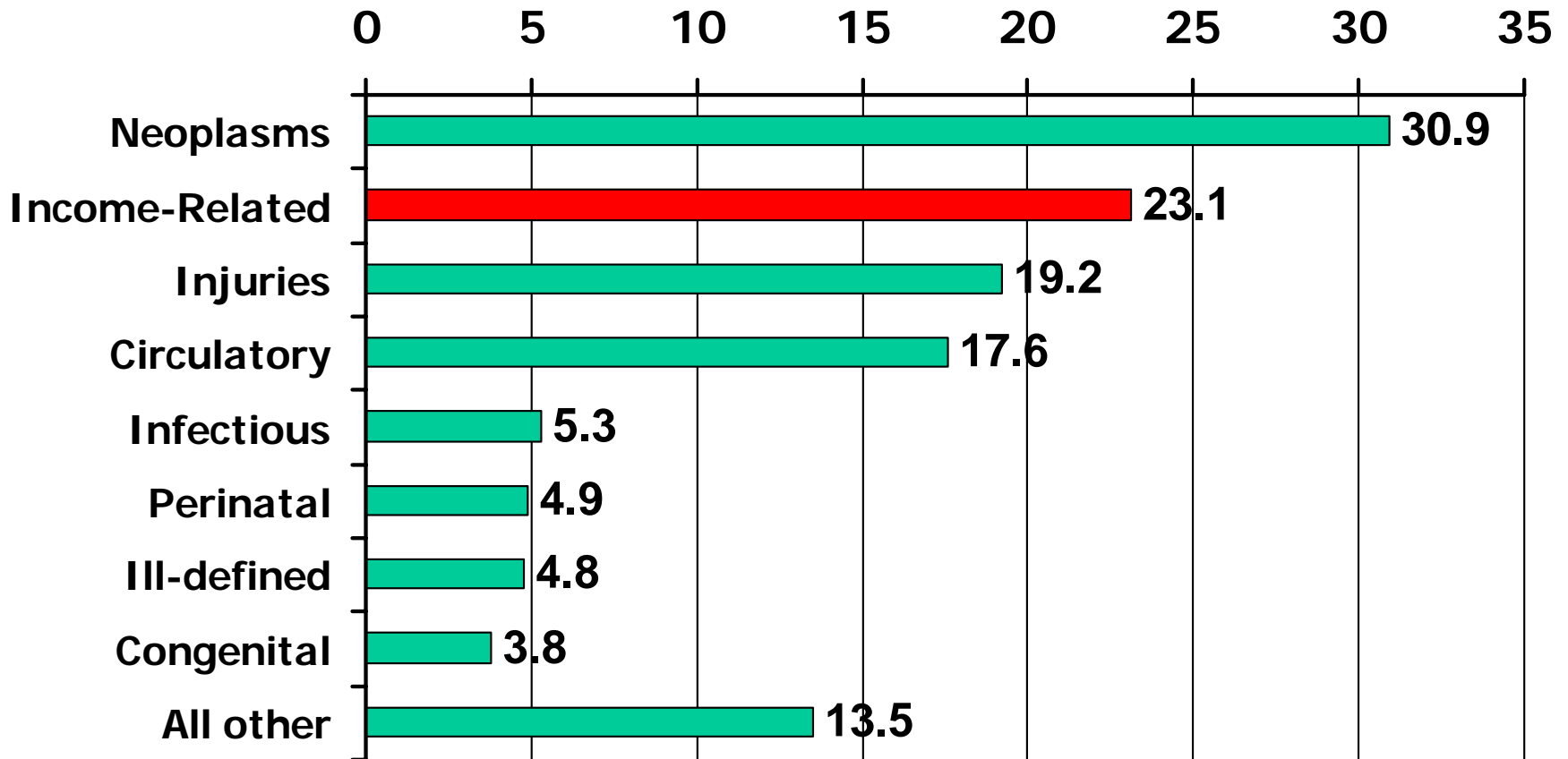
- Canadian studies show that on average:
 - Men in the top 20% of the income scale live 6 years longer than those in the bottom 20%. They can expect 14 more years of disability-free life.
 - Women in the top 20% of the income scale live 3 years longer than those in the bottom 20%. They can expect 8 more years of disability-free life.

Mortality Rates by Neighbourhood Income: Urban Canada, 1971-1996

%



PYLL(0-74) by Cause, 1996





**“medicine and politics cannot
and should not be kept apart”**

Sir Geoffrey Rose, MD (1992)

The Logic of Neighbourhoods & Health Research

- health behaviours and health status are the outcome of more than just individual factors (e.g., income, attitudes, etc.)
- health behaviours are significantly shaped by 'health opportunity structures'
 - e.g., availability of parks & rec, healthy foods, etc.
- health outcomes shaped by more than just individual socio-economic status
 - low SES individuals => 'deprivation amplification'

Attributes of Neighbourhoods with Links to Health: 5 R's

- **risks:** environmental contaminants, crime, violence, noise, and dangerous roadways or pedestrian pathways or crossings
- **resources:** health & social services, commercial services, schools, recreational opportunities, libraries, public transit, built environment - physical activity

Attributes of Neighbourhoods with Links to Health: 5 R's

- **relationships:** social support, social capital, social cohesion, 'weak ties' collective efficacy, etc.
- **representations:** the reputation of a neighbourhood
 - residents may internalize => self-worth
 - may have an effect on service provision, movement of people, investment in the neighbourhood
- **resilience?**

Pathways Linking Neighbourhoods & Health

- **Direct:**

- behavioural
- stress / coping

- **Indirect:**

- neighbourhood reputation
- political power

- **Both direct & indirect:**

- social relationships, social capital, etc.

Current Activities

- a) Toronto-IRONhI: Intensive Research on Neighbourhoods & Health Initiative
- structured observation of social & physical disorder
 - concept mapping re: n'hood features that affect mental health & well-being
 - Rapid Small-Area Health Needs Assessment
- b) Toronto Area Health Study
- neighbourhood factors in inequalities in mental health
- c) SMH Health Database Initiative
- n'hood variation in health & health determinants
 - Ontario Urban Health Atlas Volumes 1-? in development: child health, mental health, respiratory health...

Future Themes, Directions, Issues

- policy is leading the research – good news in a way
- evaluating complex, population-level interventions
 - new methods for understanding how & why of health effects of complex neighbourhood intervention

=> **'realistic evaluation': mechanism + context = outcome**

- knowledge translation & receptor capacity in multiple sectors
- more work on 'natural experiments', eg. Regent Park, Priority N'hoods Strategy, etc.
- panel study of residents clustered in n'hoods with tracking of movers