



EVOLVING CANADIAN VALUES: EXPLORING INCOME FAULT-LINES

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WHY VALUES ARE IMPORTANT

Values, or deep dispositions, are important because they guide decisions about right and wrong and because they underpin a whole array of social, economic and political preferences.

Neil Nevitte, *Decline of Deference*

... the institutional changes that are taking place in this country, and Canadians' reactions to them, cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of changes in Canadians' underlying, and evolving, social values.

Michael Adams, *Sex in the Snow*

... the perception of life as a task and a duty to society has diminished over the last four decades, whereas the perception of life as a pleasure has increased considerably.

Hans Lenk, "Value Changes and the Achieving Society: A Social-philosophical Perspective" in *OECD Societies in Transition: The Future of Work and Leisure*

DIMENSIONS OF VALUES RESEARCH IN CANADIAN HERITAGE

Surveys examined

- ▶ *World Values Surveys 1981 and 1990*
- ▶ *International Social Survey Program*

DIMENSIONS OF VALUES RESEARCH IN CANADIAN HERITAGE *(cont'd)*

Research Objectives

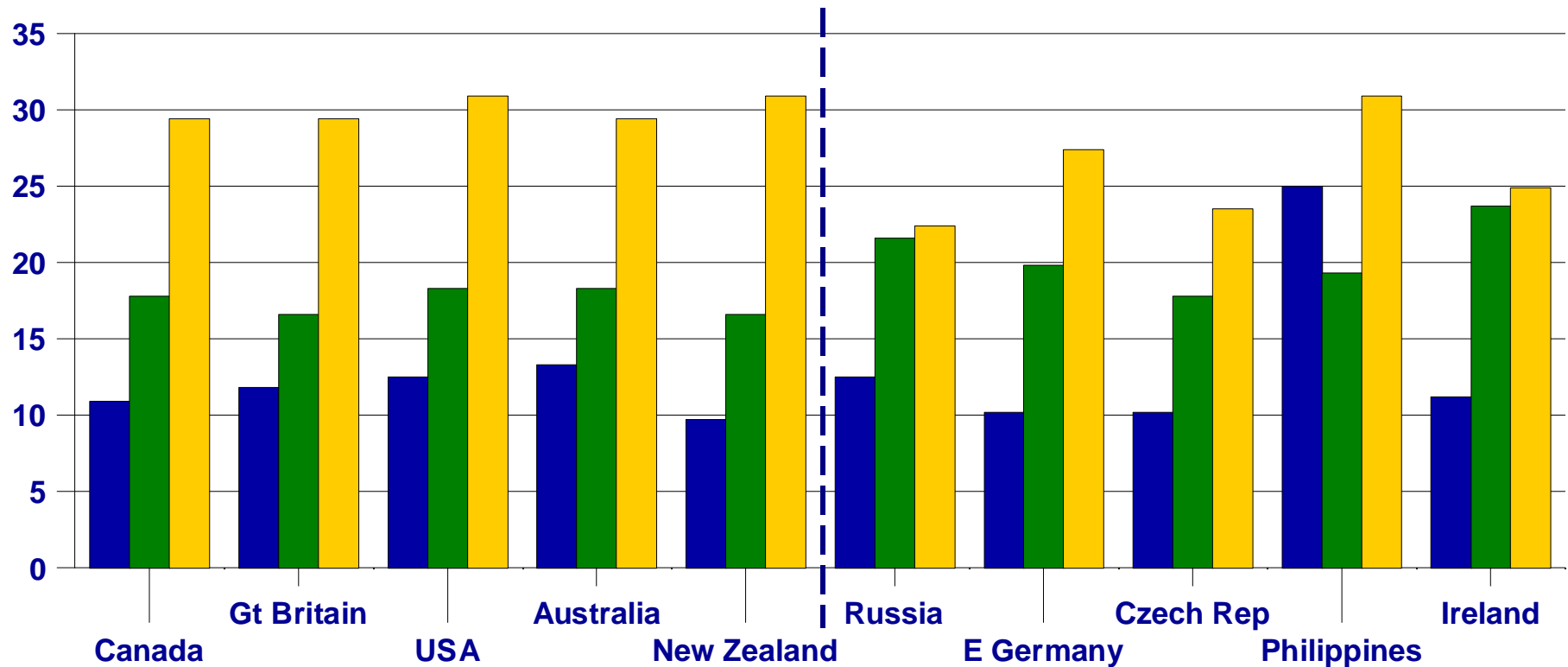
- ▶ **Current research**
 - a work “in progress”
 - “Two waves”
- ▶ **Primary focus on “unpacking” social values according to fault-lines:**
 - economic status
 - geographic location
 - cultural factors
 - demographics

DIMENSIONS OF VALUES RESEARCH IN CANADIAN HERITAGE *(cont'd)*

Preliminary Results

- ▶ Preliminary results suggest that growing pressures on the middle-income group may be having an impact on social cohesion in Canada
- ▶ Presentation today will examine income-based values trends on:
 - determinants of success
 - determinants of need
 - personal responsibility versus government responsibility for well-being
 - happiness
 - control over life

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS



Factor 1 - Birthright

Defined as race, gender, religion, political beliefs, region

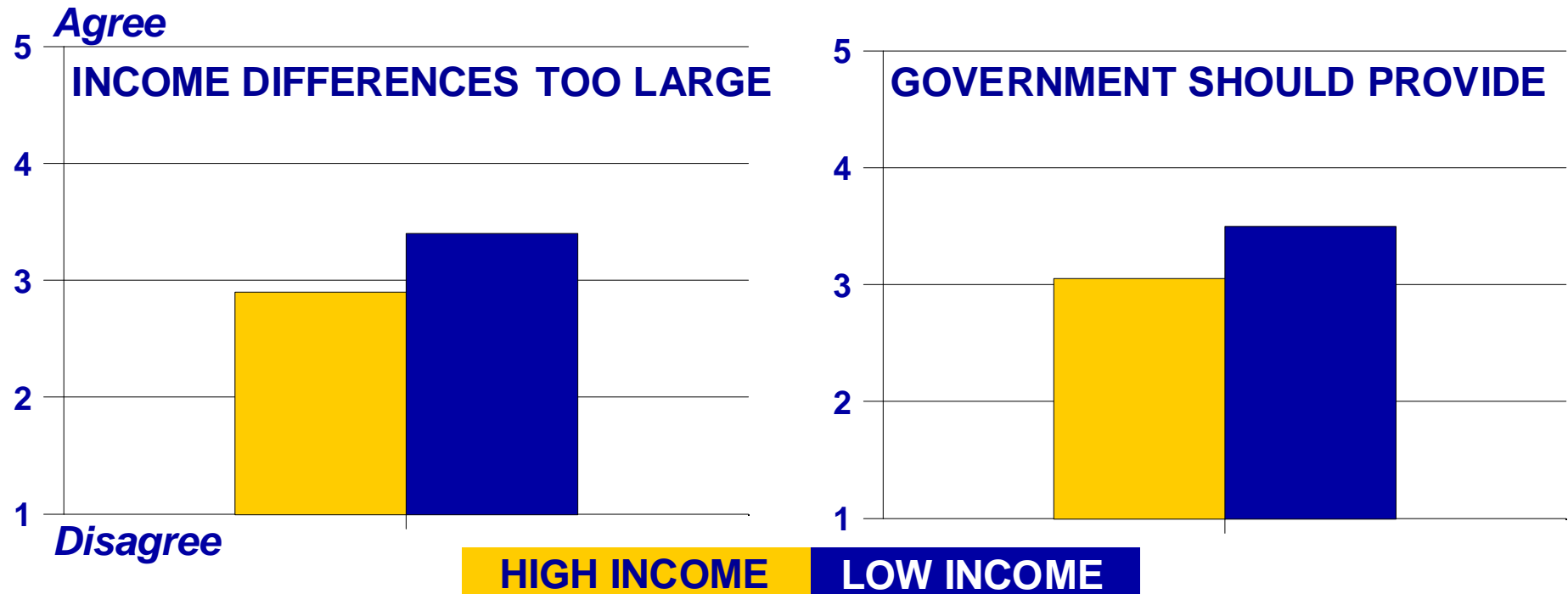
Factor 2 - Connections

Defined as wealth, political, social and family connections

Factor 3 - Hard work

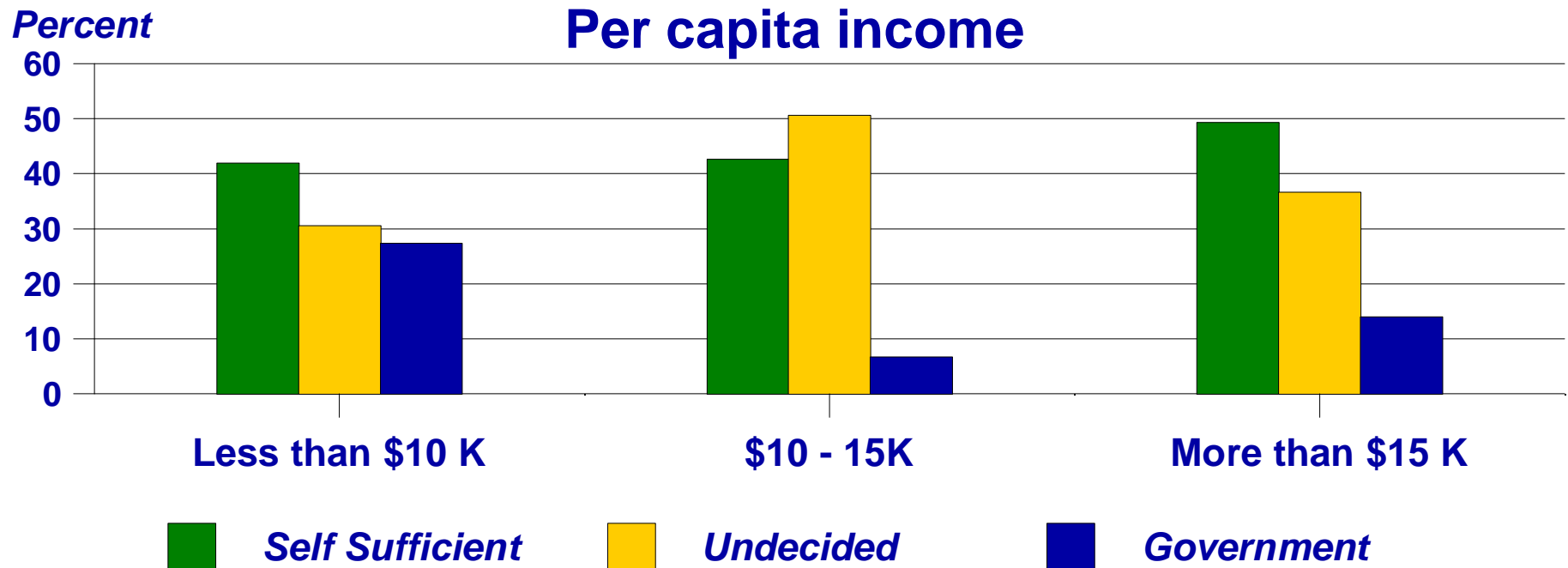
Defined as ambition, natural ability, good education, effort

BELIEFS ON INCOME DISTRIBUTION AND GOVERNMENT'S ROLE



- ▶ People at all income levels tend to agree that income differences are too large.
- ▶ Canadians believe that the government should provide for poor people.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR WELL-BEING



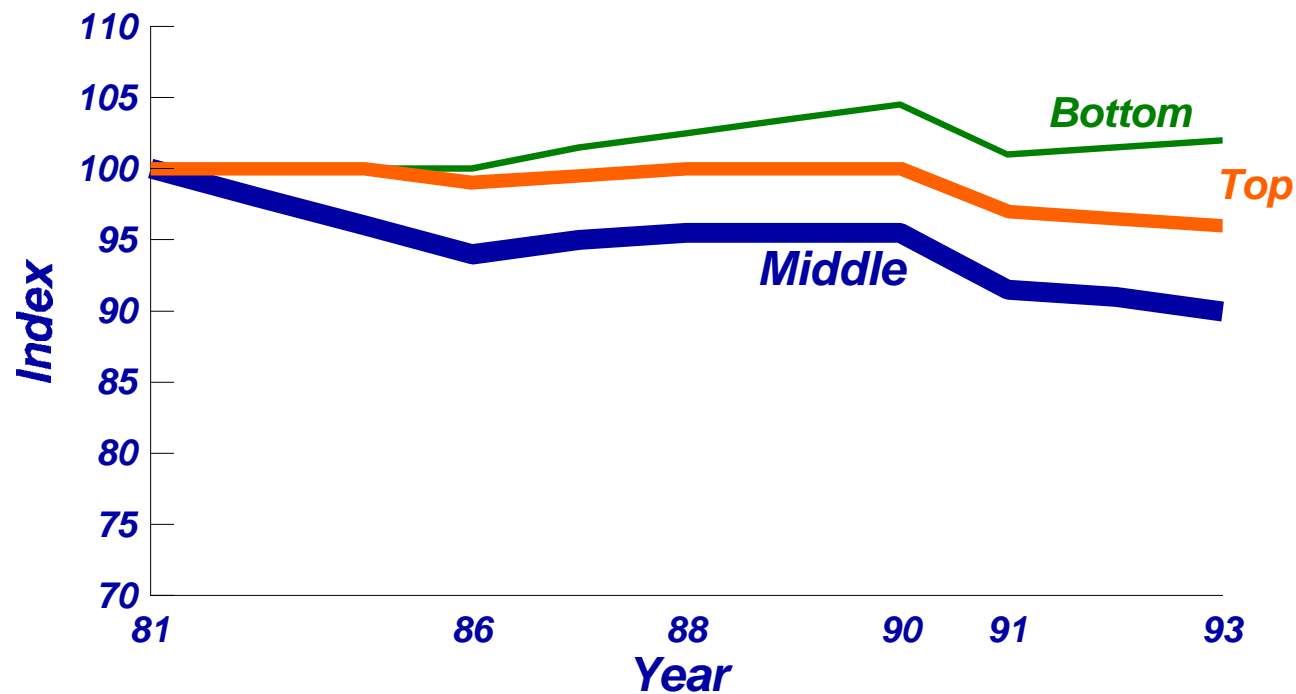
Respondents were asked whether:

- individuals should take more responsibility for providing for themselves
- government should take more responsibility for providing for people

Support for self-sufficiency is high overall, but rises with income.

INDEX OF REAL DISPOSABLE FAMILY INCOME

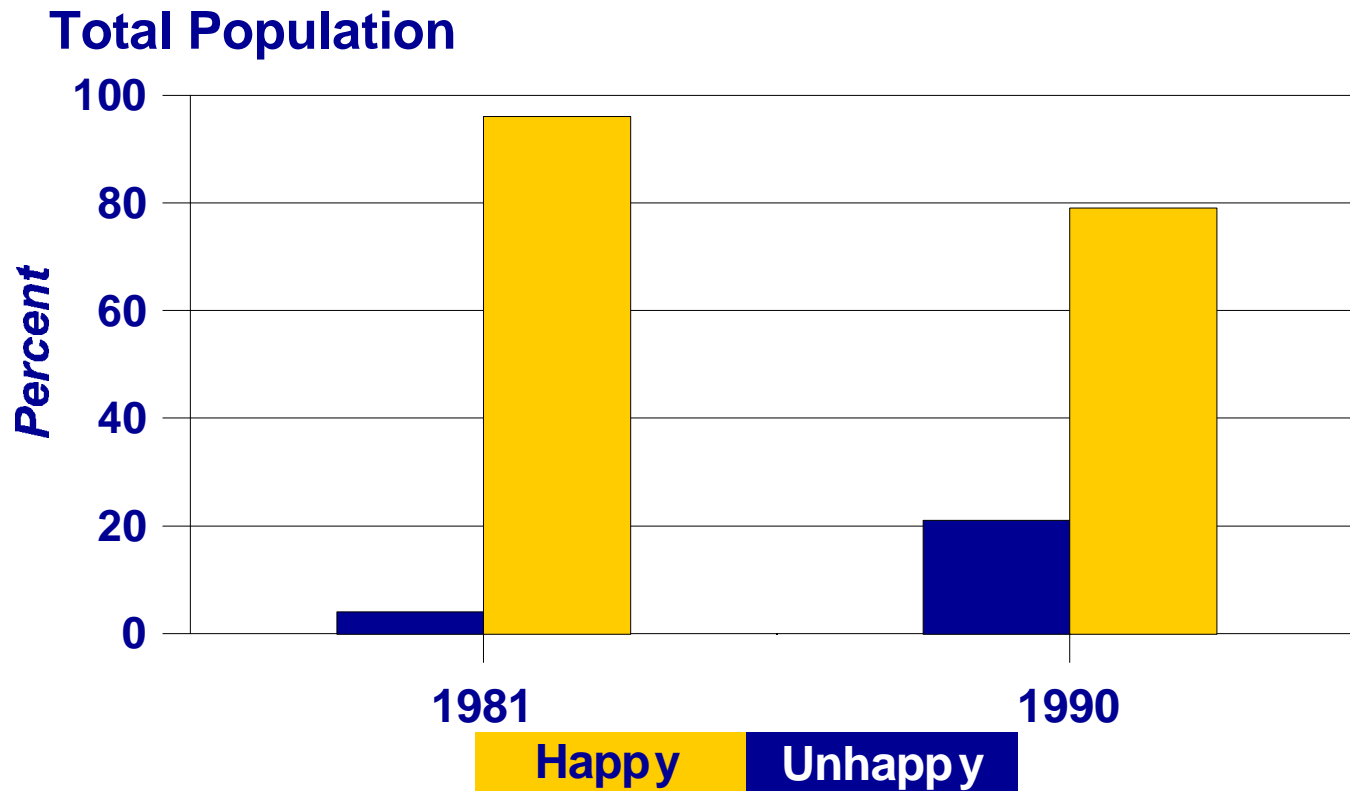
Disposable Income: Post Tax, Post Transfer



Middle-income Canadians have seen the biggest decline in disposable income over the past decade and a half.

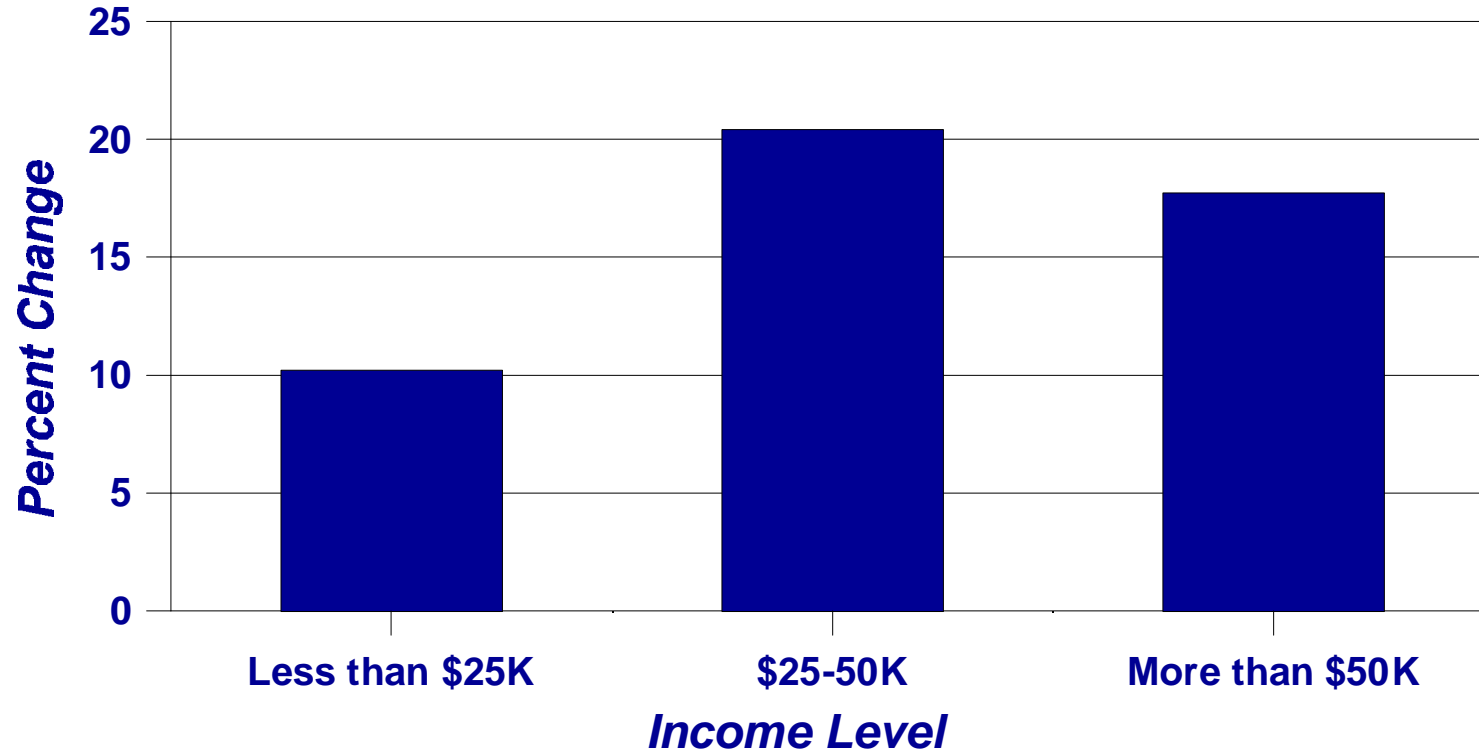
HAPPINESS

Happiness and Household Income Total Population



General decline in happiness between 1981 and 1990.

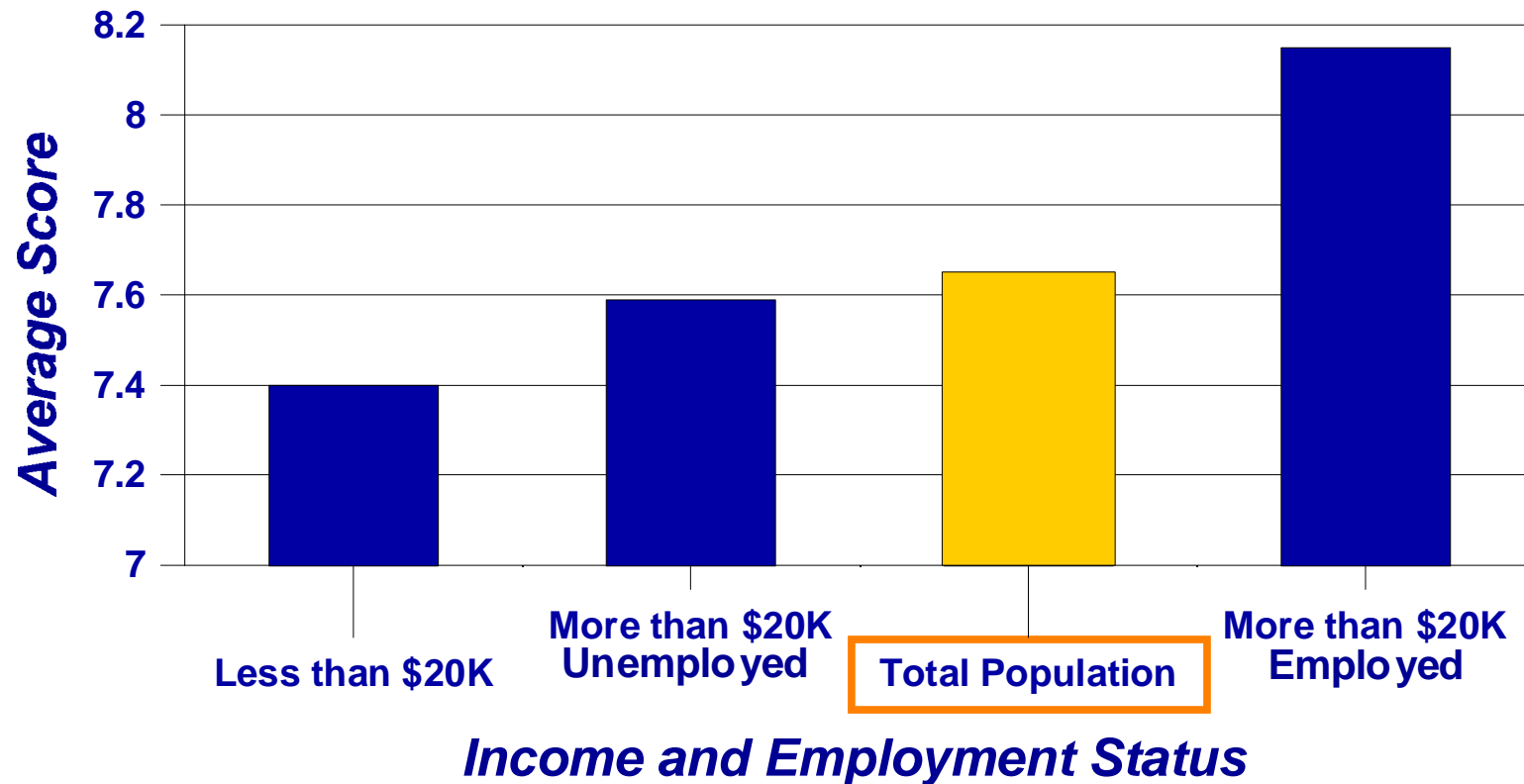
1981-1990 INCREASE IN UNHAPPINESS BY INCOME LEVEL



Much of the change in overall population unhappiness is due to a shift in the middle-income population (those with household incomes of \$25,000 to \$50,000).

CONTROL OVER LIFE

Control over Life by Income Level & Employment Status



Feelings of being in control rise as income increases

IMPLICATIONS OF INCOME-BASED TRENDS FOR CANADIAN POLICY MAKERS

Self-sufficiency versus government intervention

- ▶ **Canadians are not inclined to blame others for being in need**
- ▶ **People want to be self-sufficient**

IMPLICATIONS OF INCOME-BASED TRENDS FOR CANADIAN POLICY MAKERS

Happiness and loss of control

- ▶ **Current pressure on social cohesion in Canada related to changes in income and rising unemployment.**
- ▶ **Middle income people have become significantly less happy over the past 15 years**
- ▶ **Unemployment and low income are major factors contributing to loss of control**