



# **An Analysis of the Major Threats and Challenges Facing Society Today**

September 2015

Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

- 1. Heritage**      **The roots of the Western tree**  
The Judeo-Christian ethic gave birth to the free & prosperous West yet is now being abandoned
- 2. Disaster!**      **Challenges facing society today**  
A survey, with particular attention to economic weaknesses
- 3. Response**      **Christians being Christians**

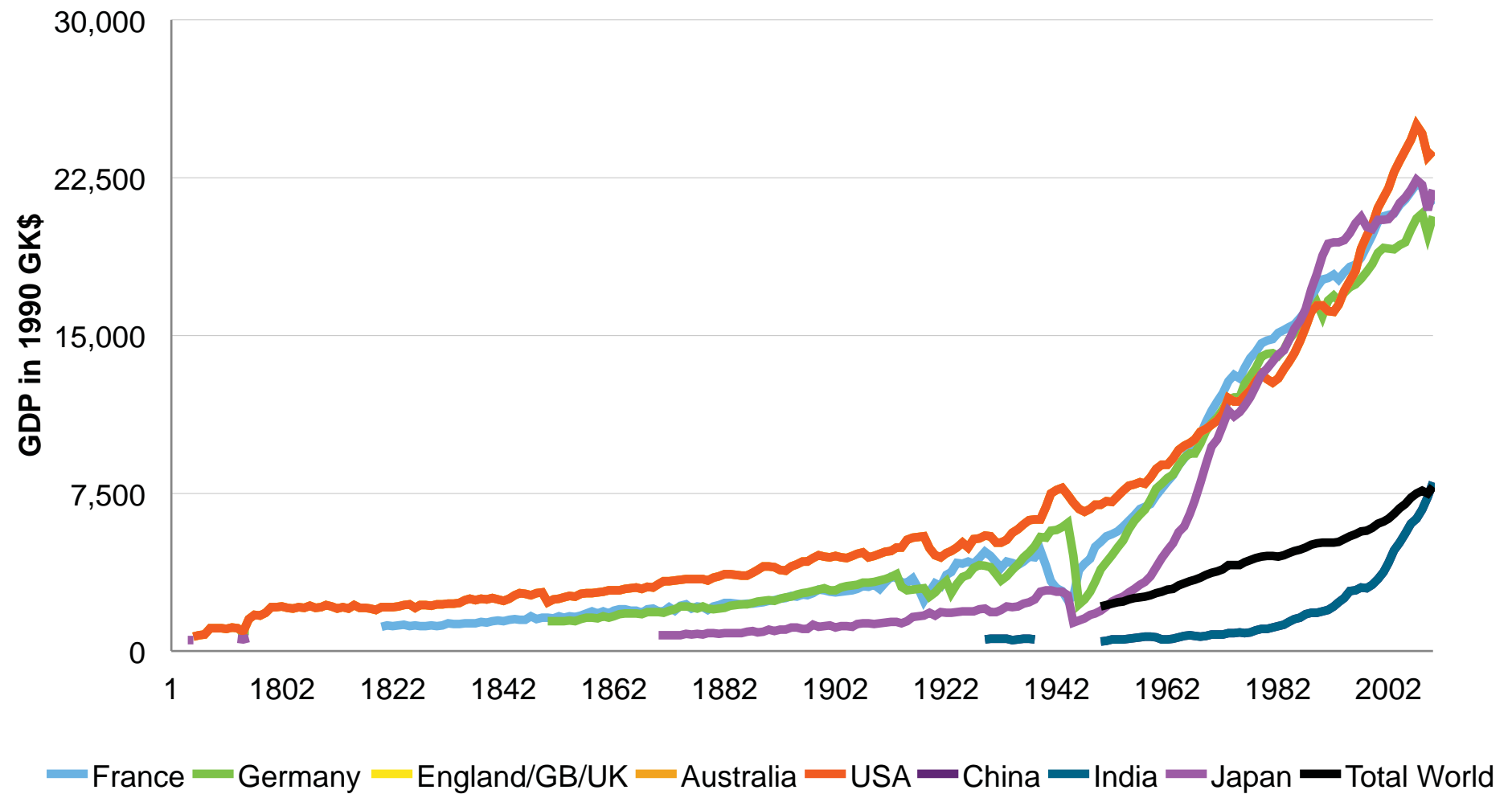
# The Protestant Reformation

## A Societal Revolution



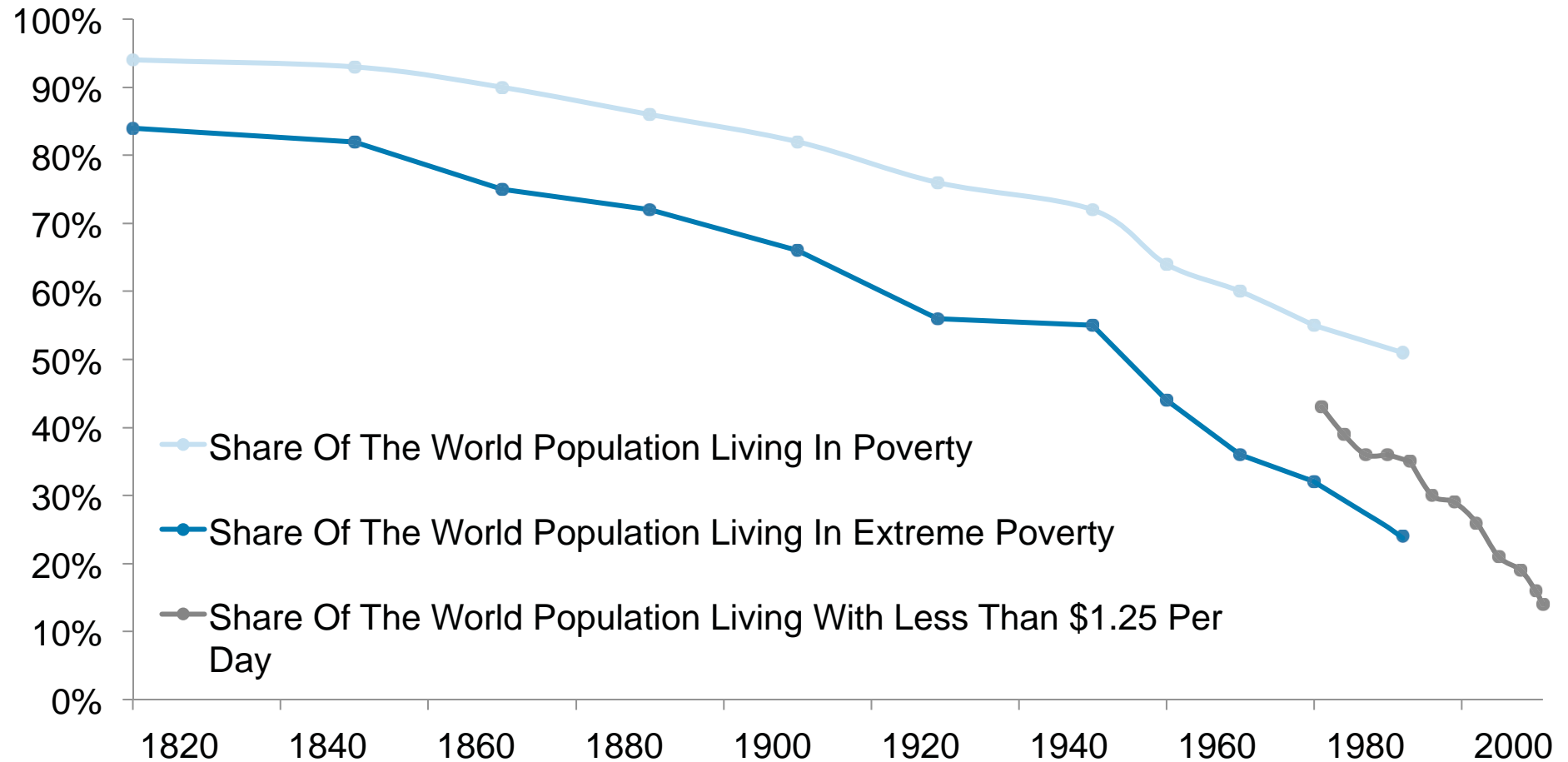
- “Here I stand ...”
- New societal norms:
  - Political framework
  - Legal system
  - Approach to the weak and needy
  - Education
  - Social structures
  - Intellectual and productive endeavour

# Increasing Global GDP



# Declining Global Poverty

## Share Of World Population (1820-2011)



# Rodney Stark

## Historical Thesis



### Reason

- Understand God
- Understand world

### Progress

- Towards the eschaton
- In human material wellbeing

### People

- Egalitarianism & tolerance
- Political, legal, social structures

## The Capitalist West

- Rule of law
- Intellectual pursuit & scientific discovery
- Pluralistic democracy
- Freedoms of expression & conscience
- Material prosperity
- Care for the poor

# Harold J. Berman

## Legal Polymath



“...the principle of law reform in the direction of greater humanity,  
the principle of the coexistence of diverse legal systems,  
the principle of the conformity of law to a system of morals,  
the principle of the sanctity of property and contract rights based  
on intent,  
the principle of freedom of conscience,  
the principle of legal limitations on the power of rulers,  
the principle of the responsibility of the legislature to public  
opinion,  
the principle of predictability of the legal consequences,  
as well as newer socialist principles of the priority of state  
interests and of public welfare...”

**For Western man as whole [these principles] are, above all,  
historical achievements created mainly out of the experience  
of the Christian church in the various ages of its life”.**

# Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

20 Year Study



“One of the things we were asked to look into was what accounted for the success, in fact, the pre-eminence of the West all over the world. We studied everything we could from the historical, political, economic, and cultural perspective. At first, we thought it was because you had more powerful guns than we had. Then we thought it was because you had the best political system. Next we focused on your economic system. But in the past twenty years, we have realised that the heart of your culture is your religion: Christianity.

**That is why the West is so powerful. The Christian moral foundation of social and cultural life was what made possible the emergence of capitalism and then the successful transition to democratic politics. We don't have any doubt about this.”**



# Robert Woodberry

## Protestant Missionaries = Democracy



Published in The American Political Science Review in May 2012.

Historical and statistical analysis shows that "conversionary protestants" were a crucial catalyst in the rise and spread of global stable democracy.

- religious liberty,
- mass education
- mass printing
- newspapers
- voluntary organizations
- colonial reforms

[http://www.academia.edu/2128659/  
The\\_Missionary\\_Roots\\_of\\_Liberal\\_Democracy](http://www.academia.edu/2128659/The_Missionary_Roots_of_Liberal_Democracy)

[http://www.hillcountryinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/  
missionaryrootsofliberaldemocracy.pdf](http://www.hillcountryinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/missionaryrootsofliberaldemocracy.pdf)

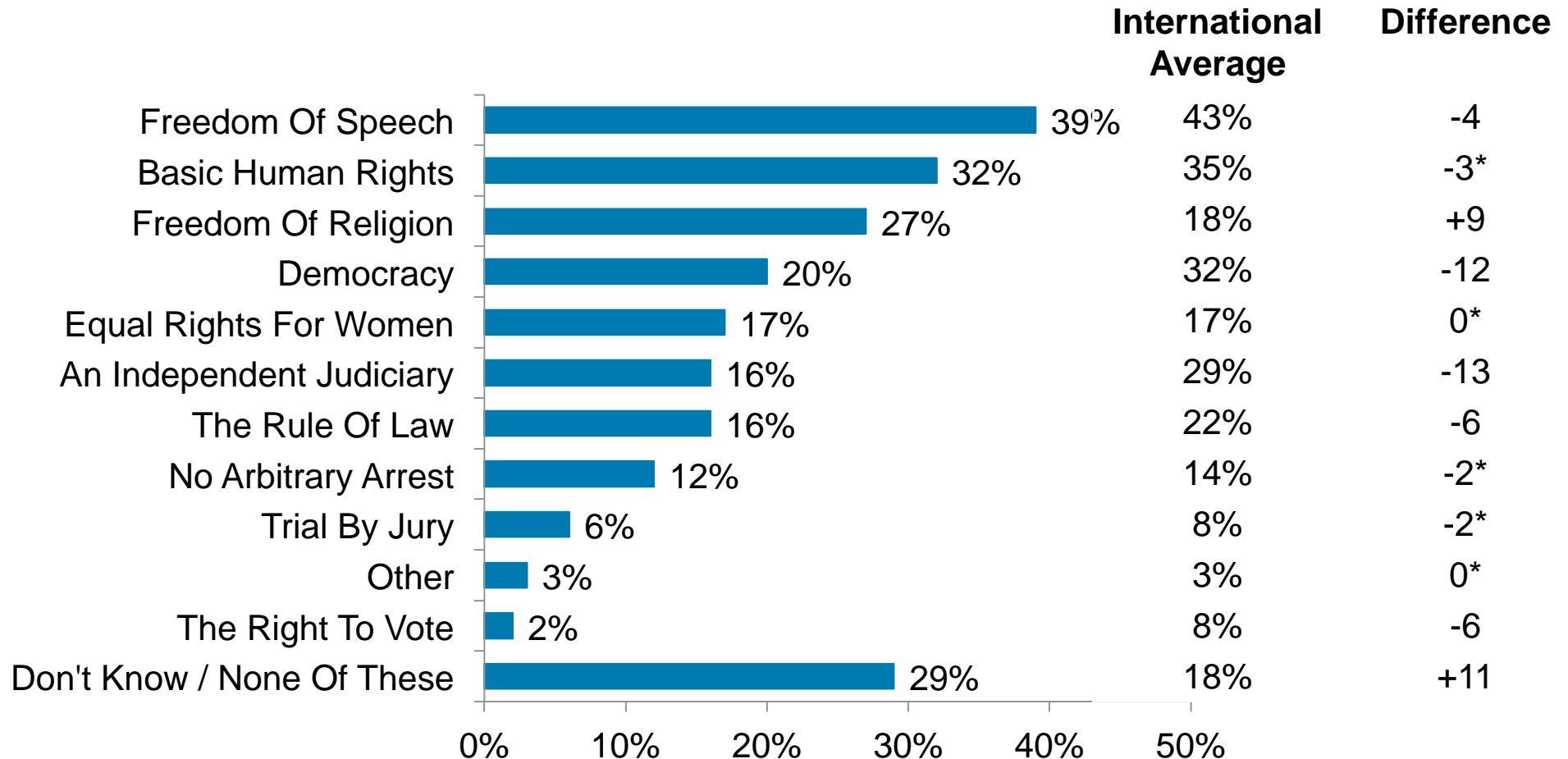
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- Stark, Rodney America's Blessings: How Religion Benefits Everyone, Including Atheists (Templeton Foundation Press, U.S., 2013)
- Stark, Rodney How The West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity (Isi Books, 2014)
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- Steyn, Mark American Alone: The End of of the World as We Know It (Regnery Publishing Inc, 2008)
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- Witte, John Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation (Cambridge University Press, 2008)
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# Rights Under Threat

## In Australia Today

Which three or four, if any, of these rights do you feel are most under threat today?

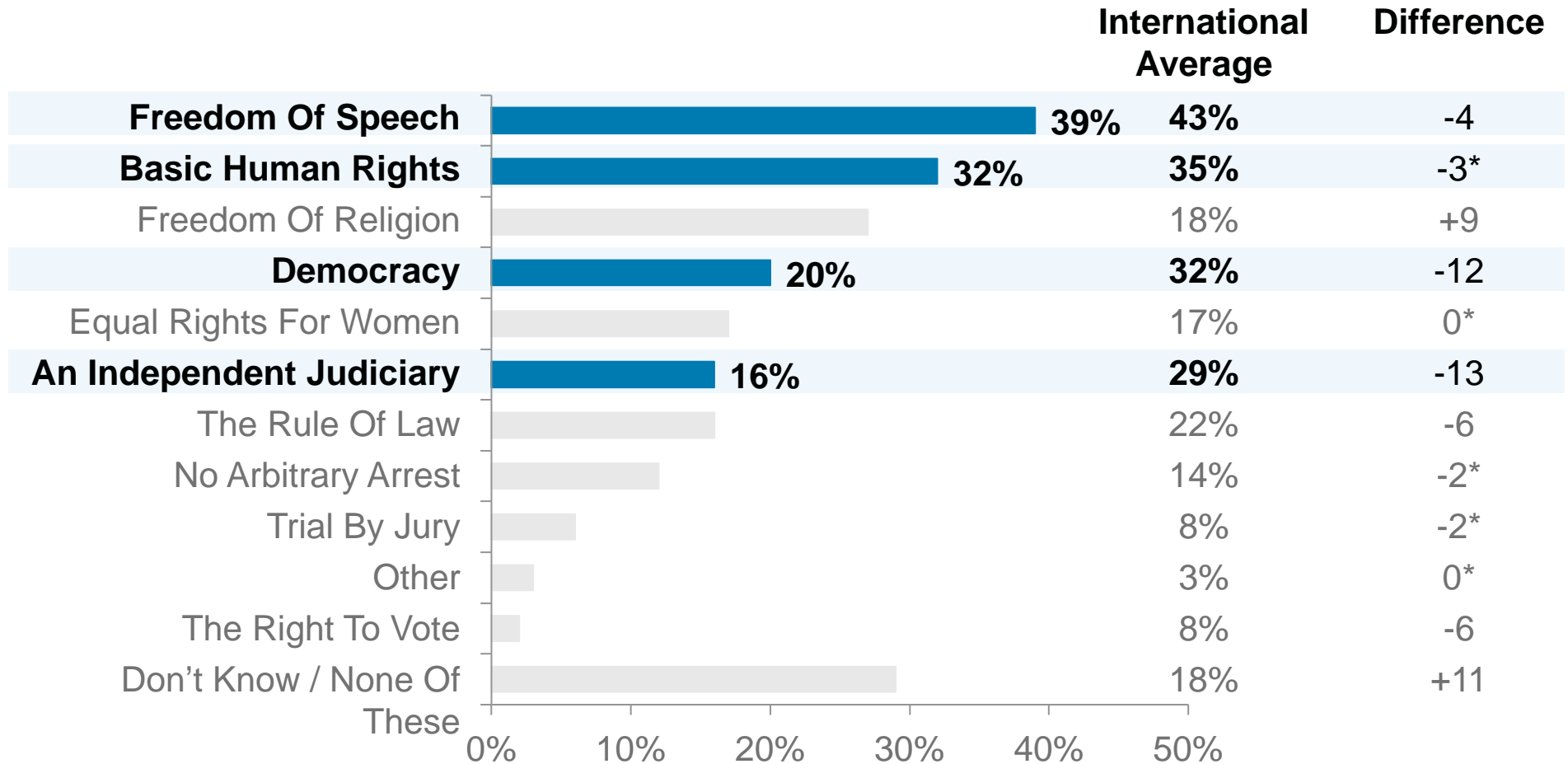




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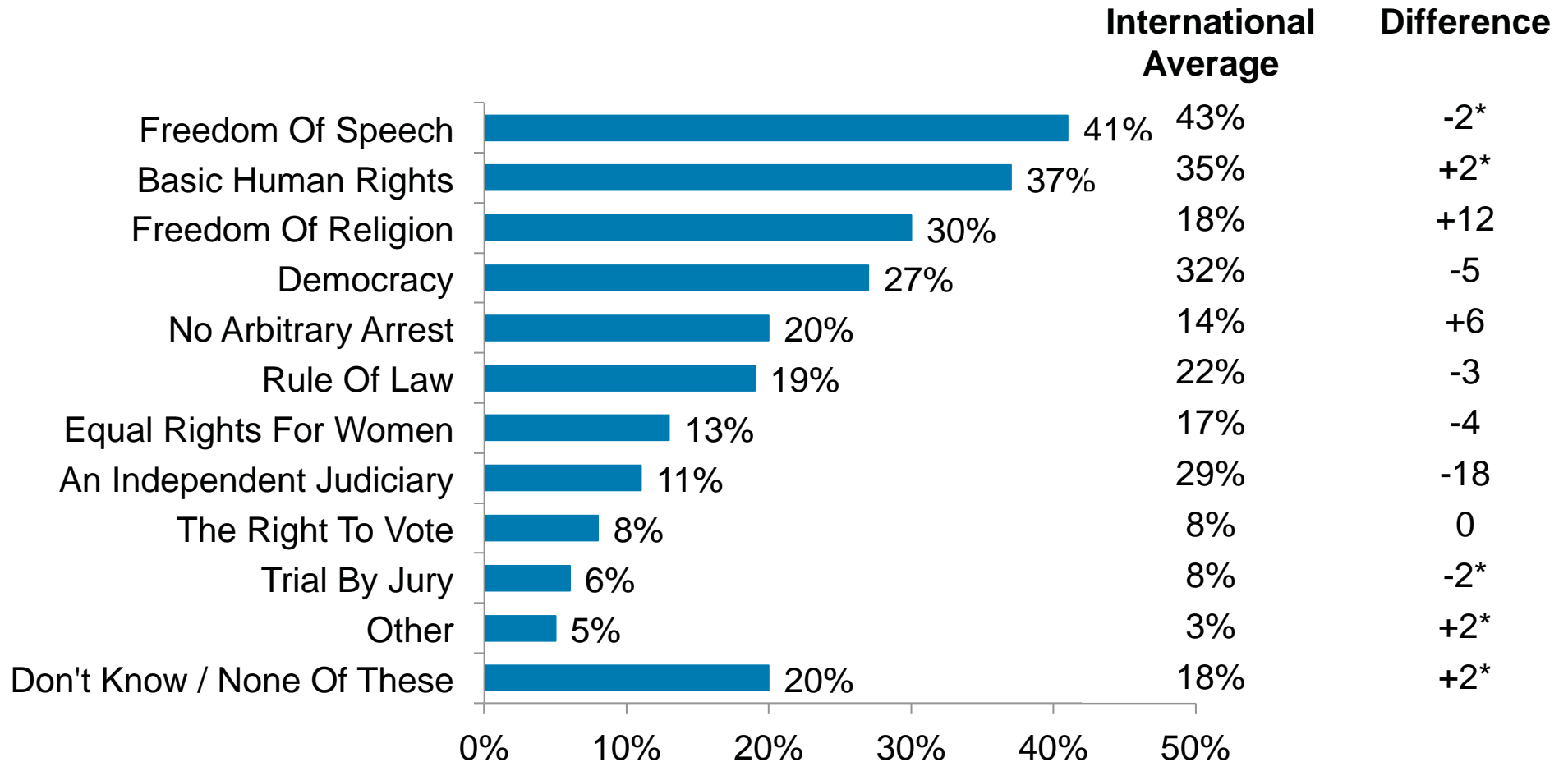




# Rights Under Threat

In America Today

Which three or four, if any, of these rights do you feel are most under threat today?

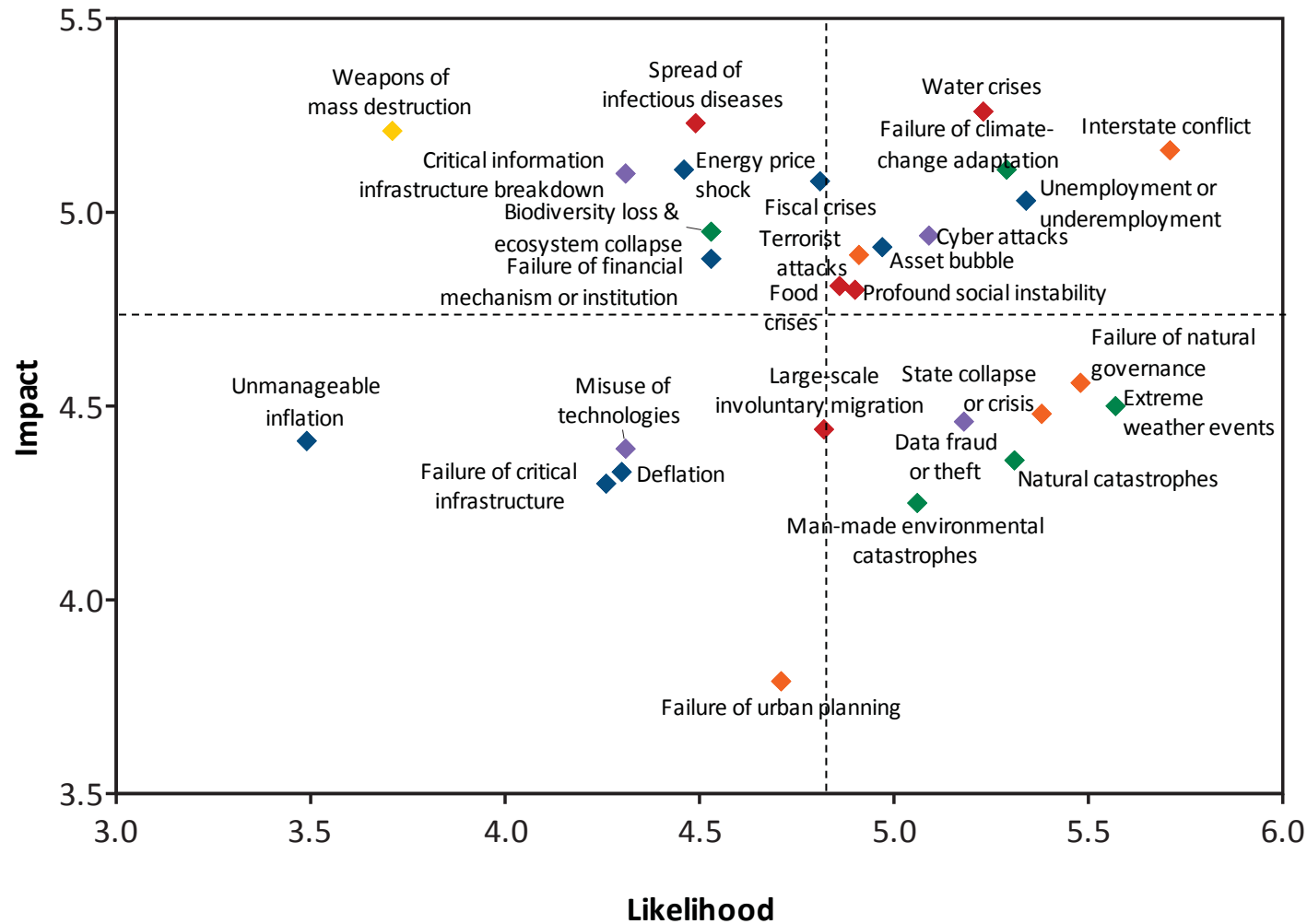


1. **Heritage**      **The roots of the Western tree**  
The Judeo-Christian ethic gave birth to the free & prosperous West yet is now being abandoned
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3. **Response**      **Christians being Christians**

# Impending Challenges

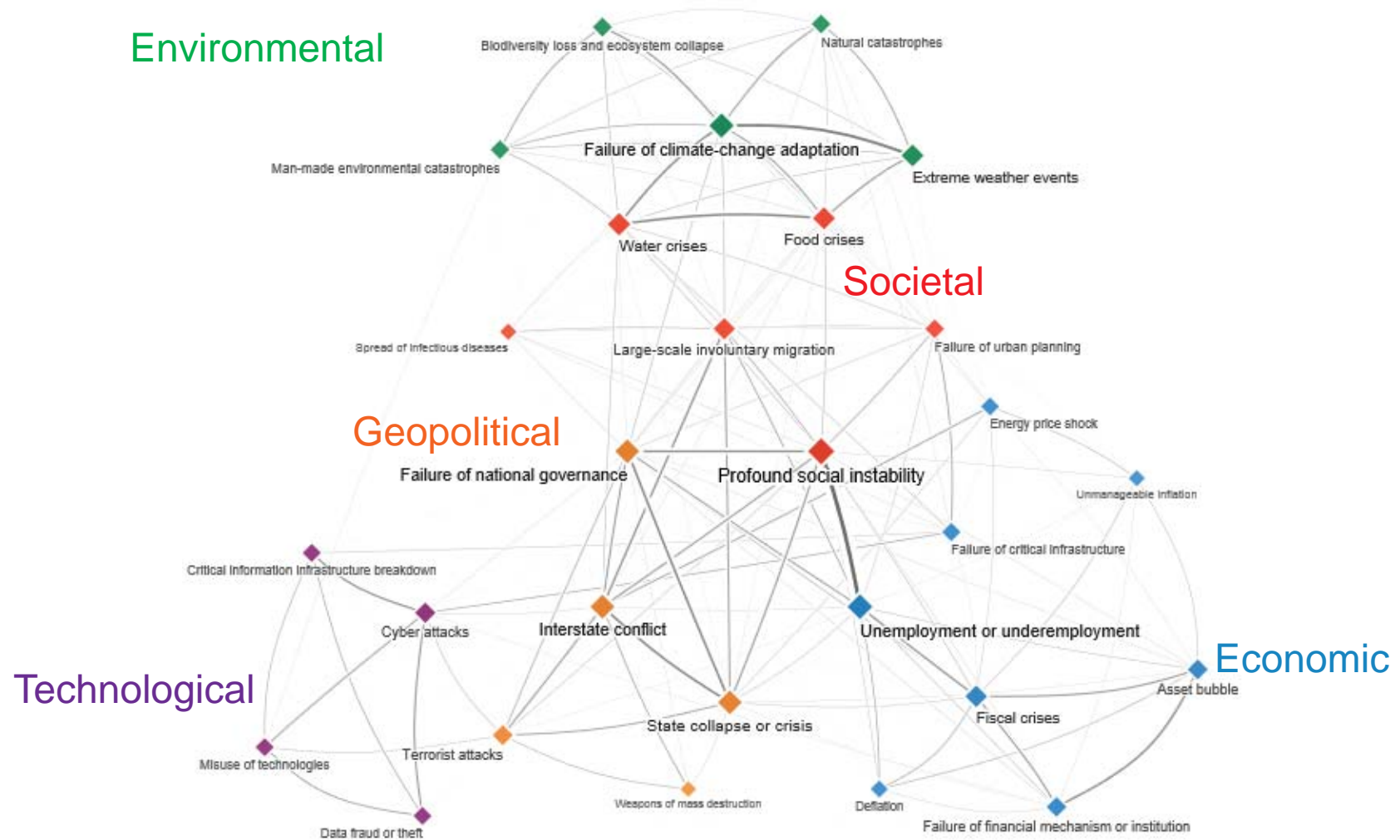
World Economic Forum

## Risk Categories



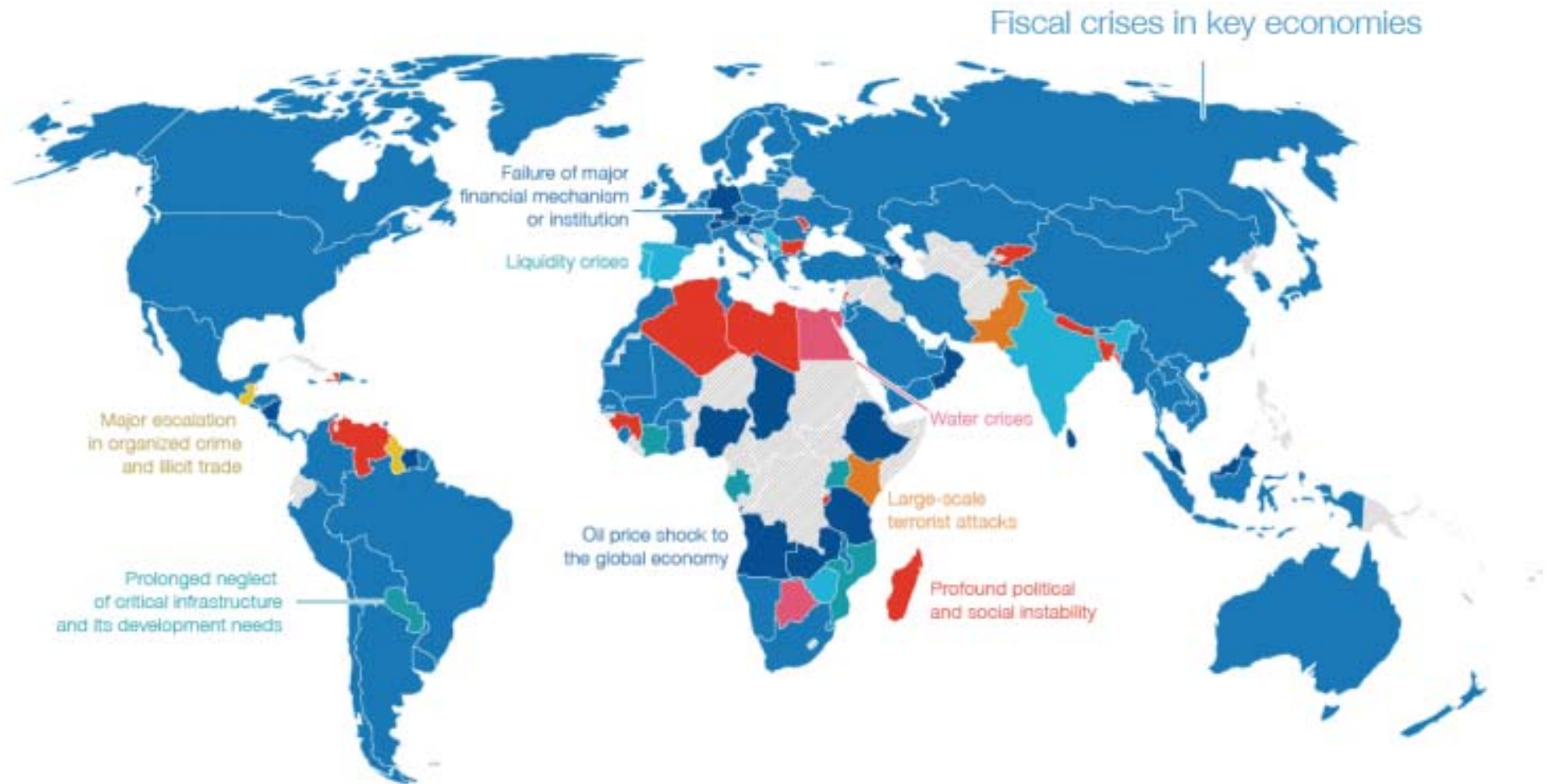
# Impending Challenges

## Risk Linkages





### Global Risks Of Highest Concern For Doing Business By Country

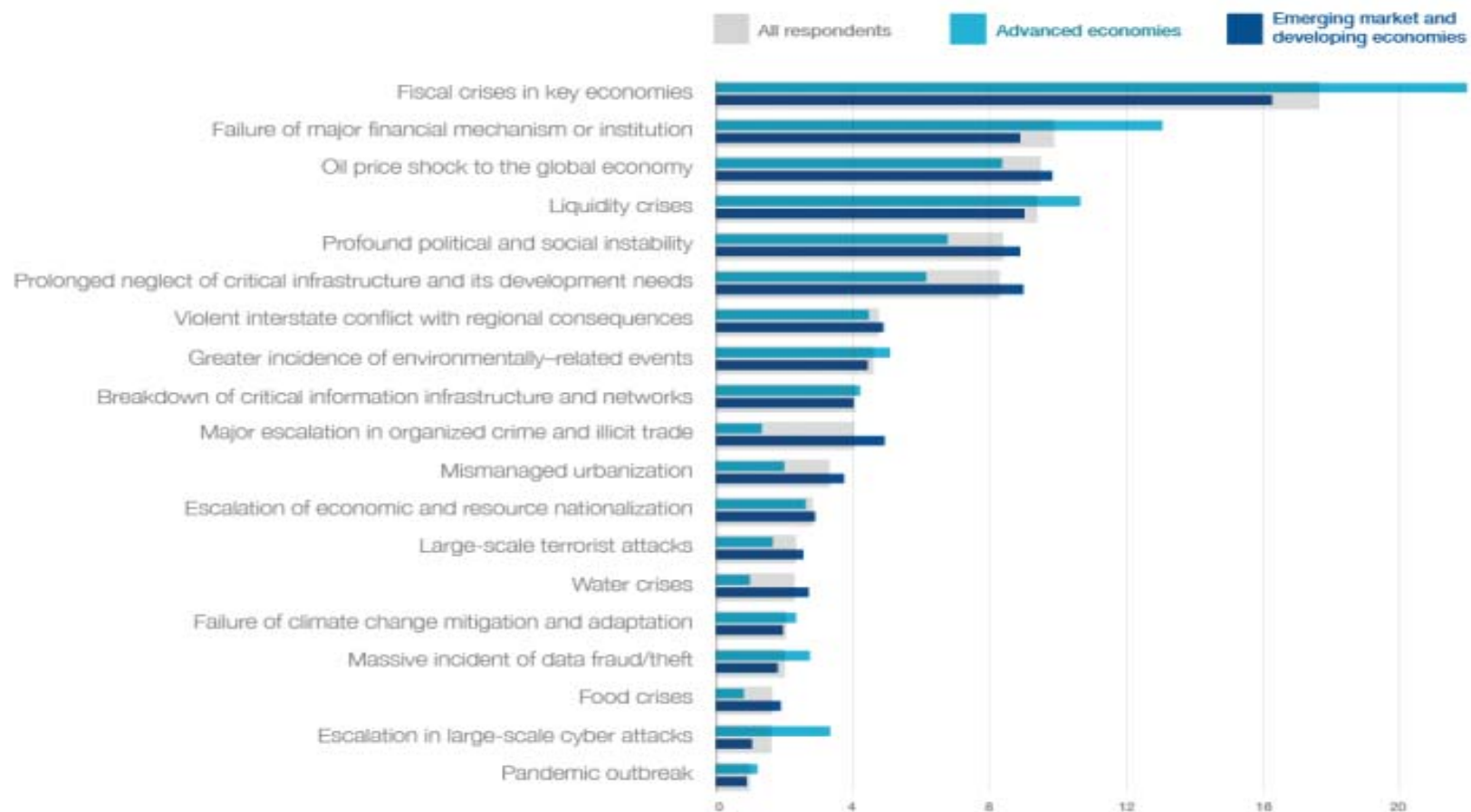


# Impending Challenges

## Risks Developing/Advanced Economies

### Global Risks Of Highest Concern For Doing Business, for Advanced Economies and Emerging Market and Developing Economies

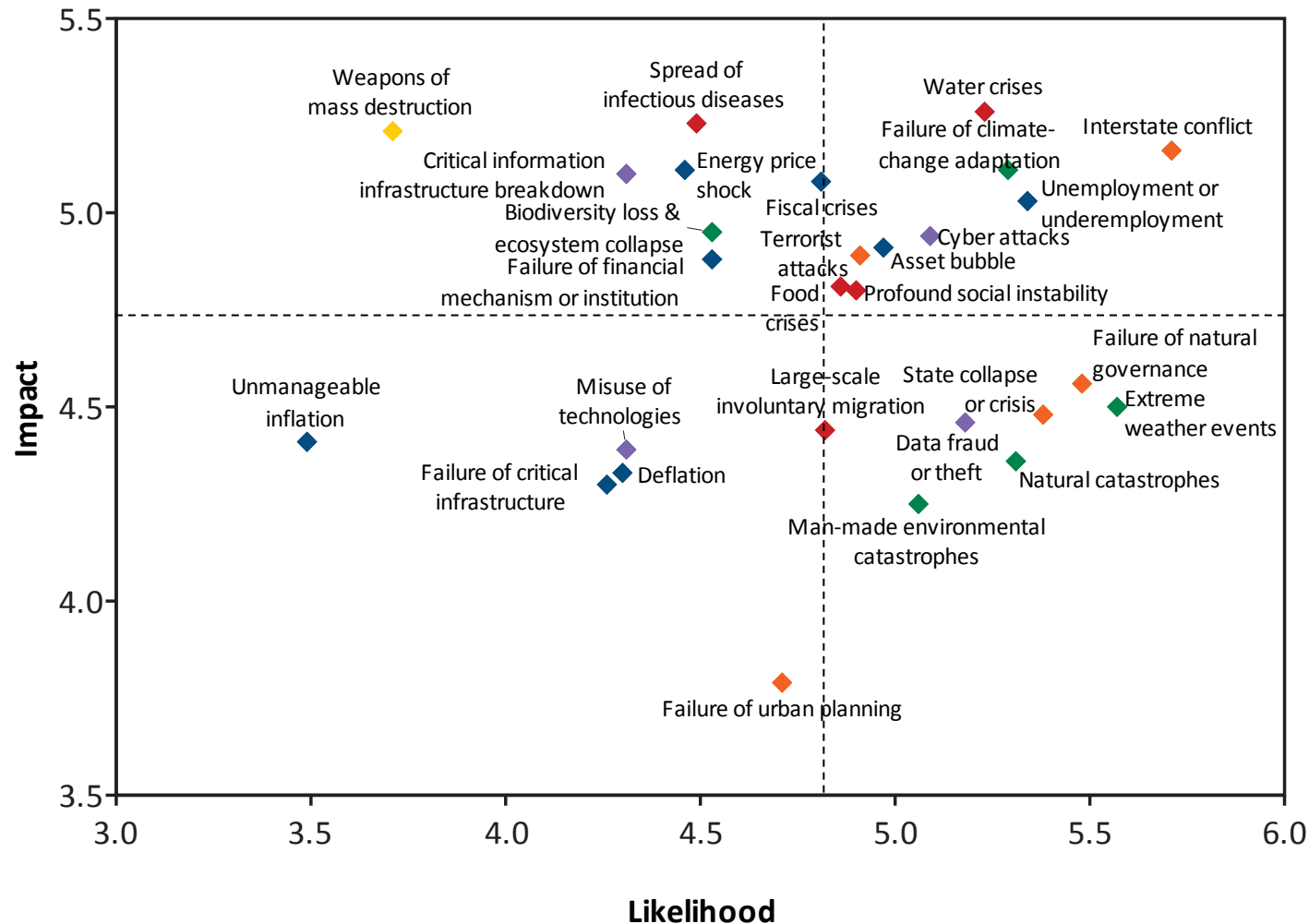
Respondents were asked to select the five risks that they are the most concerned about for doing business in their country and rank these five factors from 1 (highest concern) to 5 (lowest concern).



# Impending Challenges

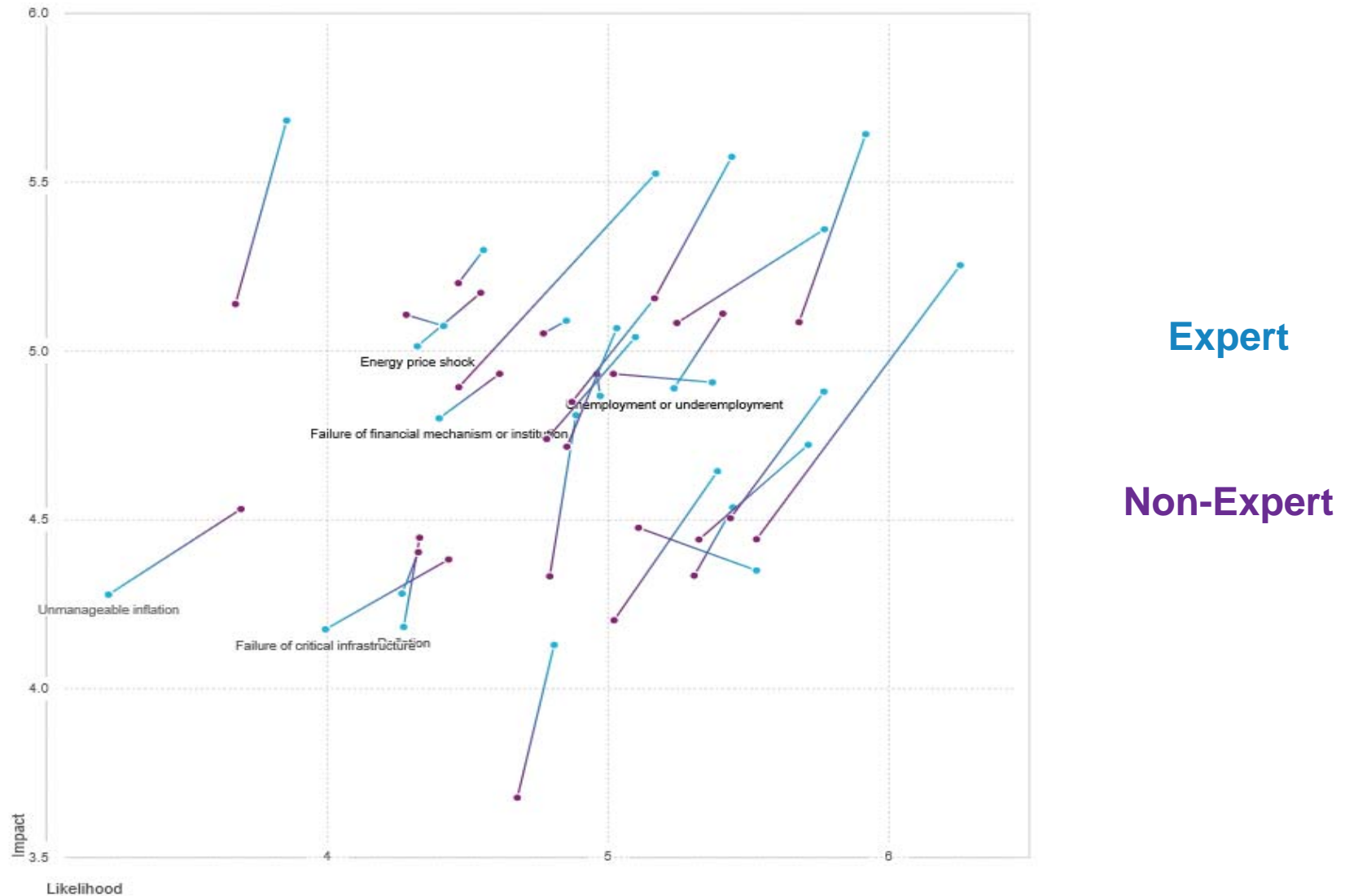
World Economic Forum

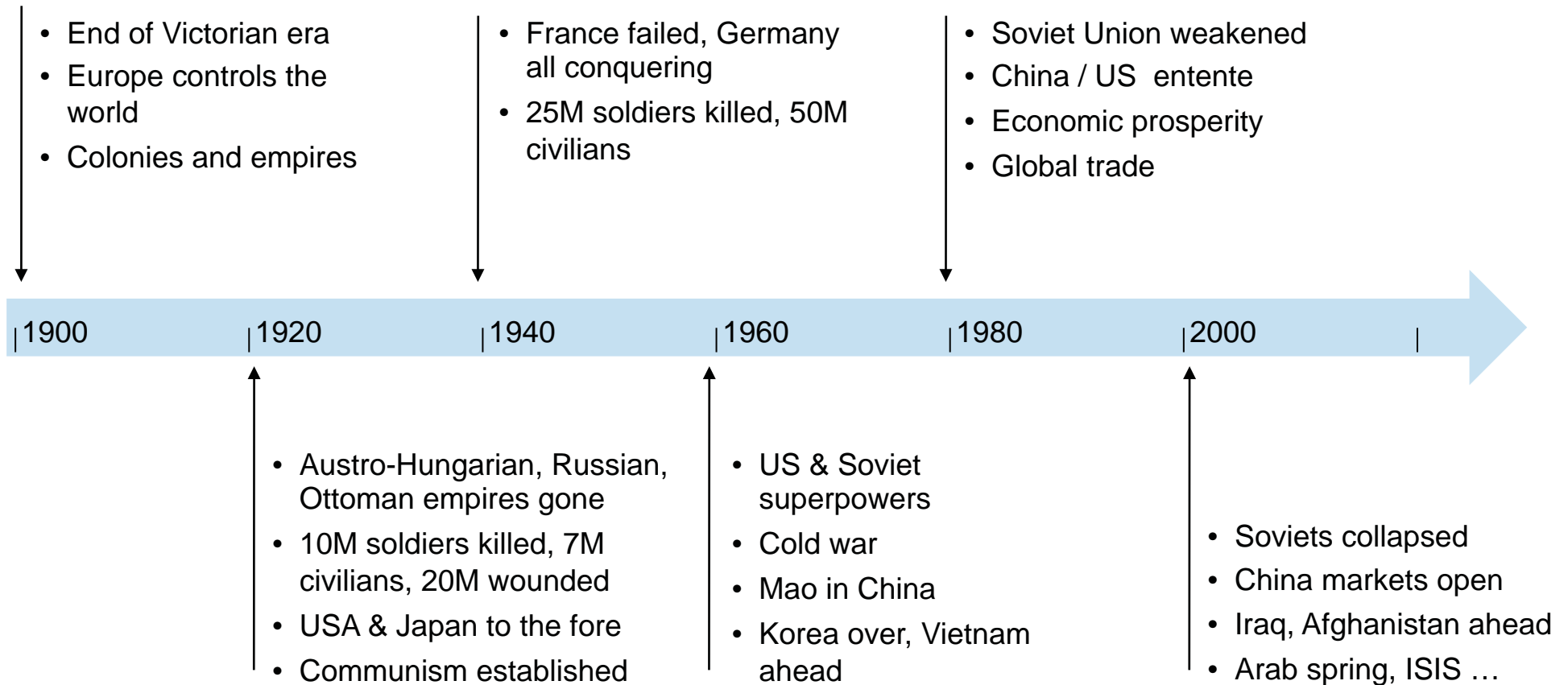
## Risk Categories

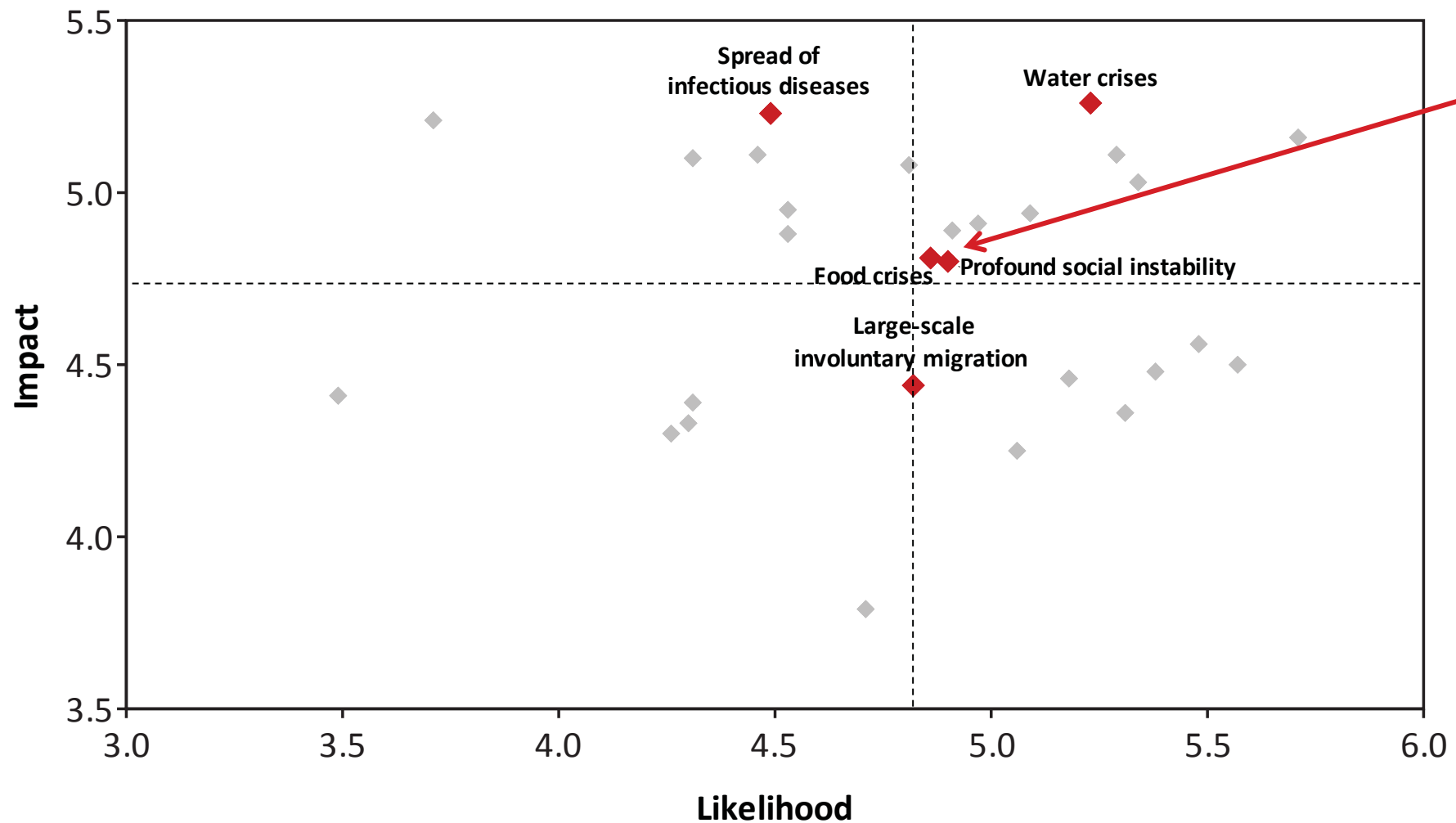


# Impending Challenges

## Experts versus Generalists







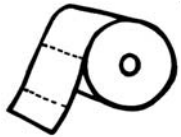
A recent survey of  
**12,800** American women found



**34%** Check their smartphone  
**before getting out of bed**

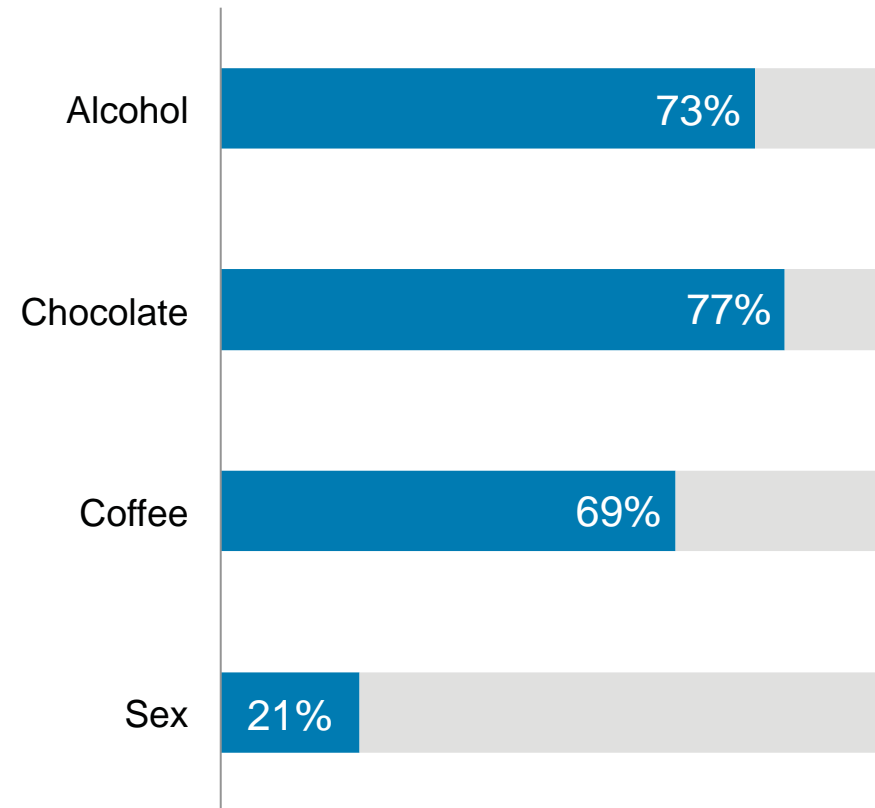


**21%** **Wake up** in the middle of  
the night to check  
Facebook

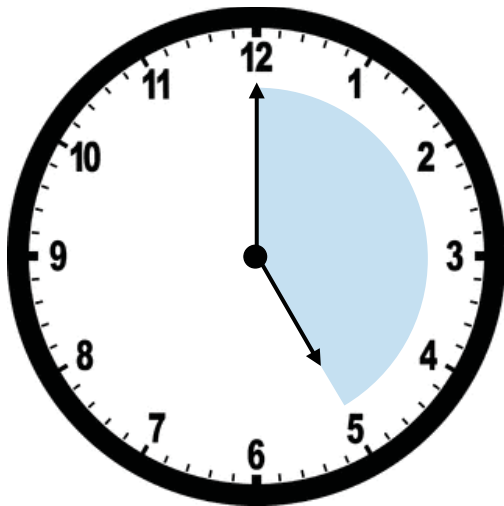


**27%** Check Facebook while  
**on the toilet**

Another study asked **what people would give up for a year** in order to not lose the internet



**A worldwide study** of internet use in university students captured **an online generation**



**Over a third** of students spend more than **5 hours** online a day

# Internet Addiction & Youth

Students surveyed **tried to “disconnect” for 24 hours** and said:

“It felt like some sort of withdrawal”

“I most likely have an addiction”

“I felt very inferior”

“I really panicked”

“Media is my drug”



# Mental Health

Australian - Men



# Mental Health

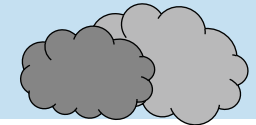
## Australian - Men



- **80% of suicides** in Australia are by men
- Suicide is the **leading cause of death** among males aged 15 – 44 years
- Up to 59% of men feel they are **not part of a community**
- Of children living with only one natural parent, the father is the **absent parent in 81% of cases**
- 61% of men have **lost contact** with more friends than they would have liked
- Men are **lonelier** than women from early adulthood right through to their seventies
- More than 70% of men view **pornography** online
- Men are twice as more likely than women to have **substance abuse disorders** than women

Women are 3x more likely than men to engage in non-fatal suicidal behaviour and constitute 54% of suicide attempts but are actually less likely to commit suicide

Depression is the most common women's mental health problem



More than 25% of women take at least one drug to treat a psychiatric condition (2010) – most prominently for depression and anxiety

23% of women vs 16.9% of men are diagnosed with mental illness

Women are 2x as likely as men:

1. To have panic disorder, general anxiety, and specific phobias;
2. To develop PTSD following a traumatic event



The National Eating Disorder Association estimates that 10 million American women suffer from eating disorders

38.5% of adult women report poor mental health

# Mental Health

## USA - General



¼ of all social security disability payments are for individuals with mental illness

Among Medicaid beneficiaries with disabilities, 49% have a mental illness

The use of drugs to treat psychiatric behaviour has rise [sic] by 22% since 2001

36,000 – 41,000 die by suicide every year. That's like losing the population of Green Bay, Wisconsin every three years



Less than 1/3 of adults with a diagnosable mental disorder receive any mental health services in a given year

Only 41.1% of Americans with a mental disorder receive treatment; 13.4% of that treatment is minimally inadequate





1 in 17 Americans live with a serious mental illness

The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than \$100 billion annually in the United States. This money is spent on addiction treatment, incarceration, homeless shelters and other preventable difficulties, like lost productivity at work



24% of state prisoners have a recent history of a mental health disorder

Up to 2/3 of homeless adults suffer from chronic alcoholism, drug addiction, mental illness or some combination of all three

1 in 5 children has had a seriously debilitating mental disorder

1 in 5 people suffer from mental illness; approximately 57.7 million Americans every year

A recent study estimates that serious mental illnesses cost society \$255.4 billion annually in lost earnings in the US

More than half of all prison and jail inmates have a mental health problem



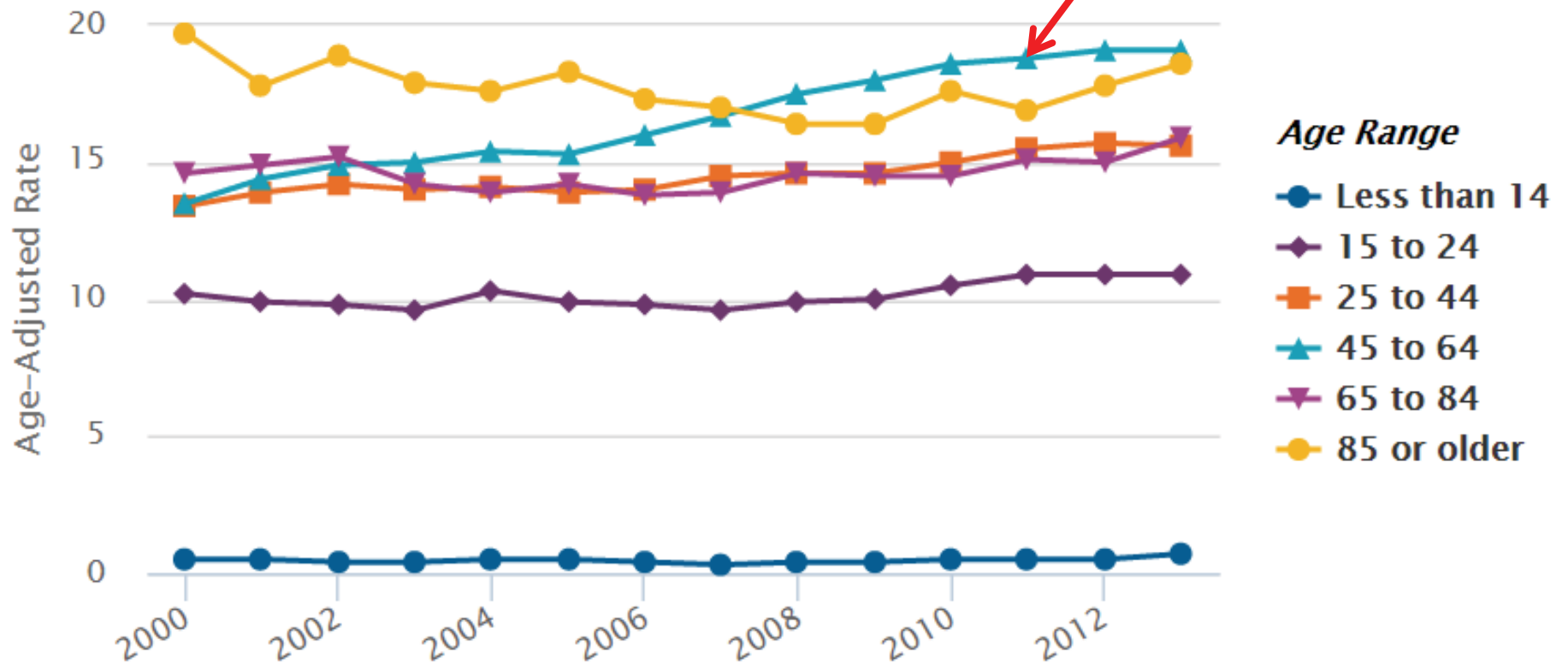
31% of adults using homeless services reported having multiple mental illnesses



# Mental Health

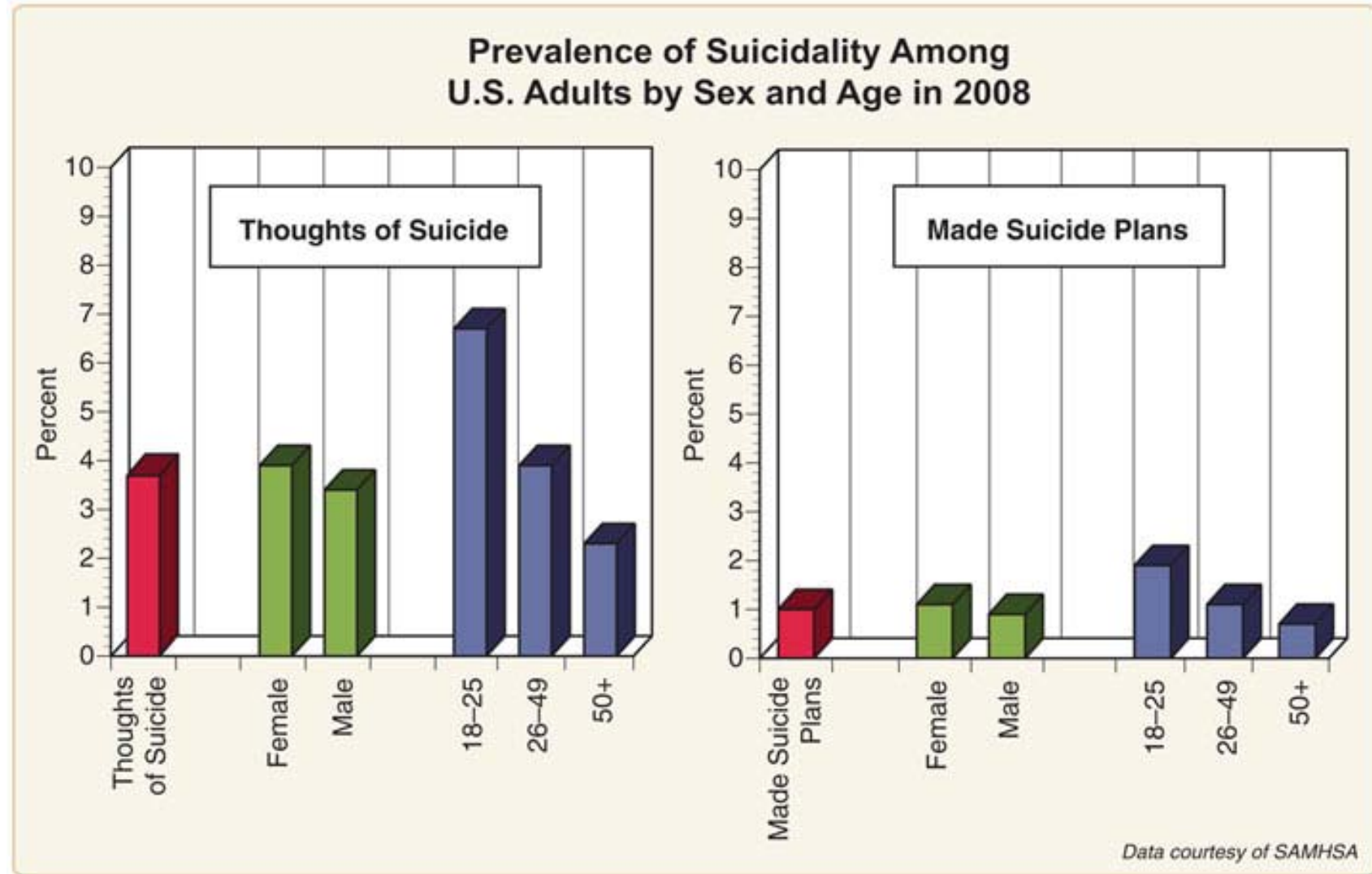
## Suicide

Rates By Age Per 100,000



# Mental Health

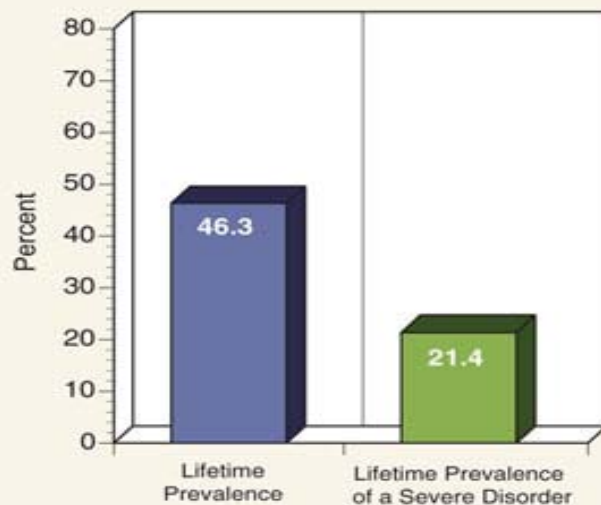
## Suicide



## Any Disorder

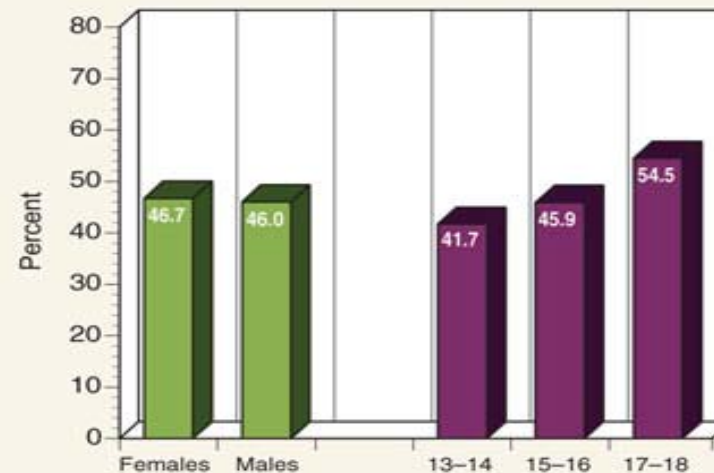
### Lifetime Prevalence of 13 to 18 year olds

- **Lifetime Prevalence:** 46.3% of 13 to 18 year olds
- **Lifetime Prevalence of “Severe” Disorder:** 21.4% of 13 to 18 year olds have a “severe” disorder



### Demographics (for lifetime prevalence)

- **Sex:** Not statistically different
- **Age:** Statistically different

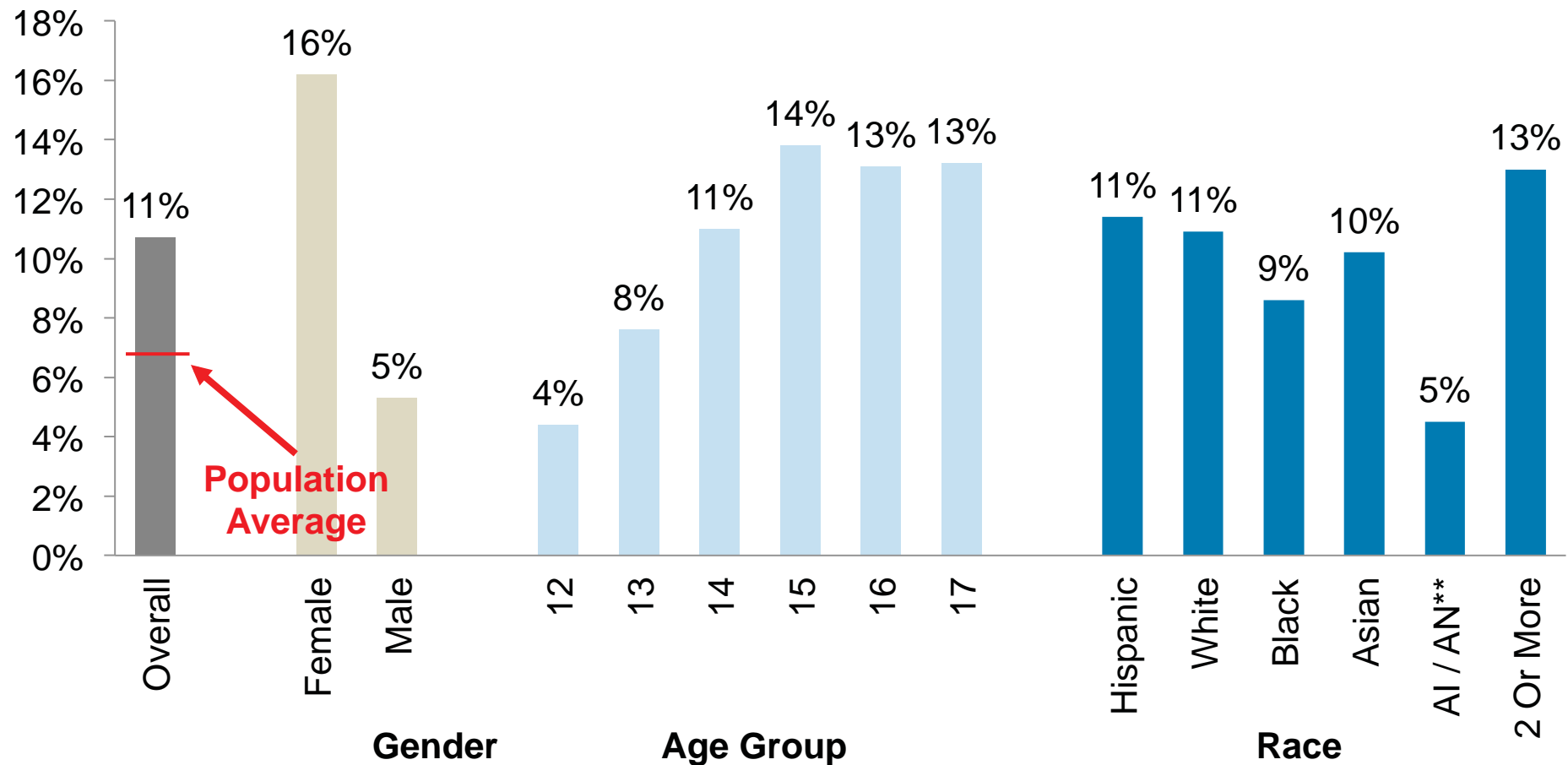


- **Race:** Statistically significant differences were found between non-Hispanic whites and other races

Merikangas KR, He J, Burstein M, Swanson SA, Avenevoli S, Cui L, Benjet C, Georgiades K, Swendsen J. Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in U.S. adolescents: Results from the National Comorbidity Study-Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 2010 Oct;49(10):980-989.



### 12-month Prevalence Of Major Depressive Episode Among US Adolescents (2013)



\*\* AI / AN = American Indian / Alaskan Native

Source: National Institute of Mental Health 2015, *Any Mental Illness Among Adults*, viewed 24/9/2015, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-among-adults.shtml>. Data courtesy of SAMHSA.

# General Health

## USA - Youth



- 17% of children (aged 5-11) are in poor or very bad health (2012)
- 20% of adolescents (aged 12-17) are in poor or very bad health (2012)

# General Health

## USA - Youth



- 18% of children (aged 5-11) are obese
- 21% of adolescents (aged 12-17) are obese

# Youth Problems

## Alcohol



- 12% of adolescents (aged 12-17) are have used alcohol in the past month

# Youth Problems

## Single Parents

**25 million (35%) children are being cared for by single parents.**





# Youth Problems

## Violence

**In the past decade, 284 children were murdered due to school violence.**

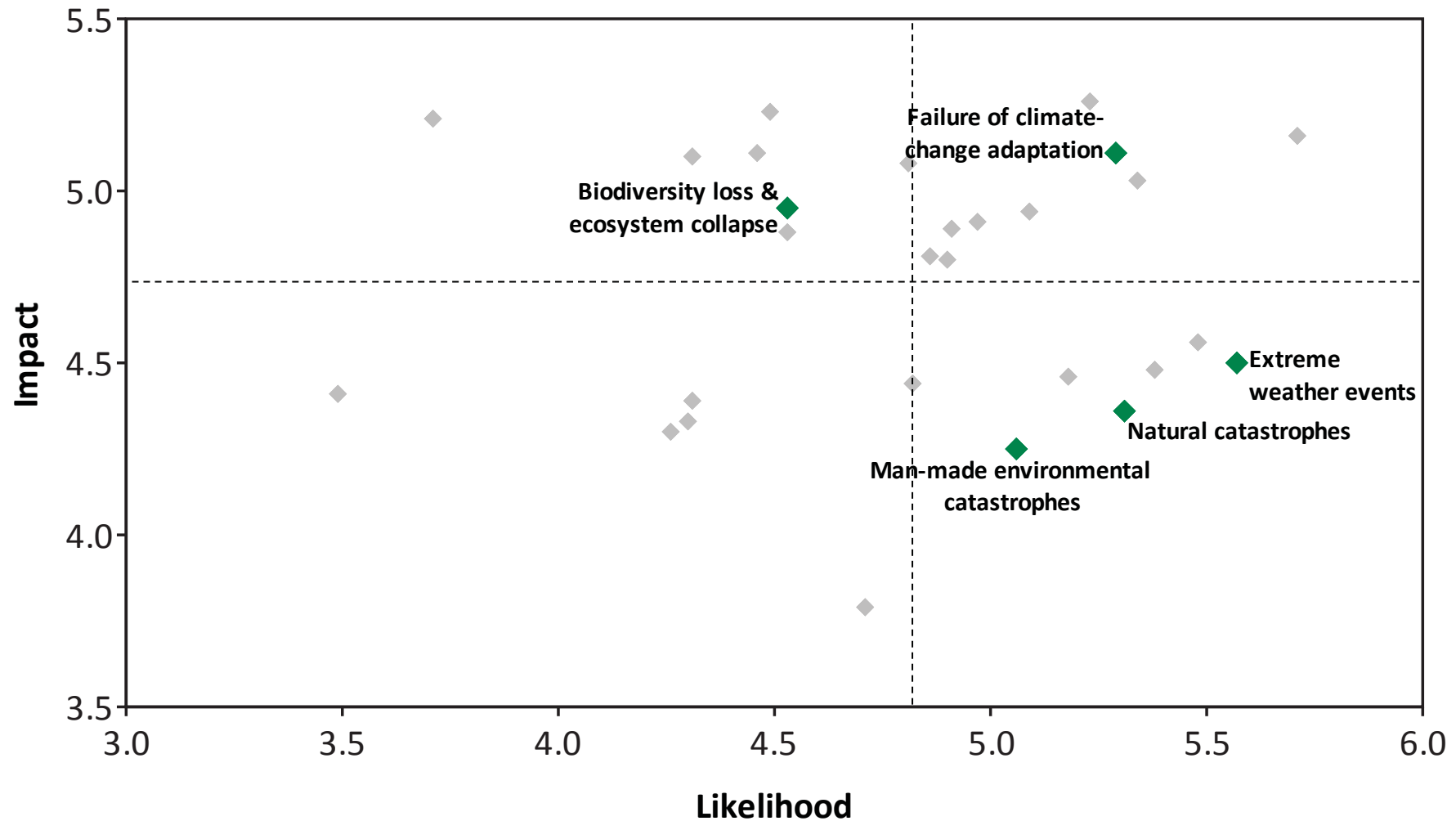


- 16 million (22%) children are in poverty
- 45% of children live in low-income families



# Impending Challenges

## Environmental



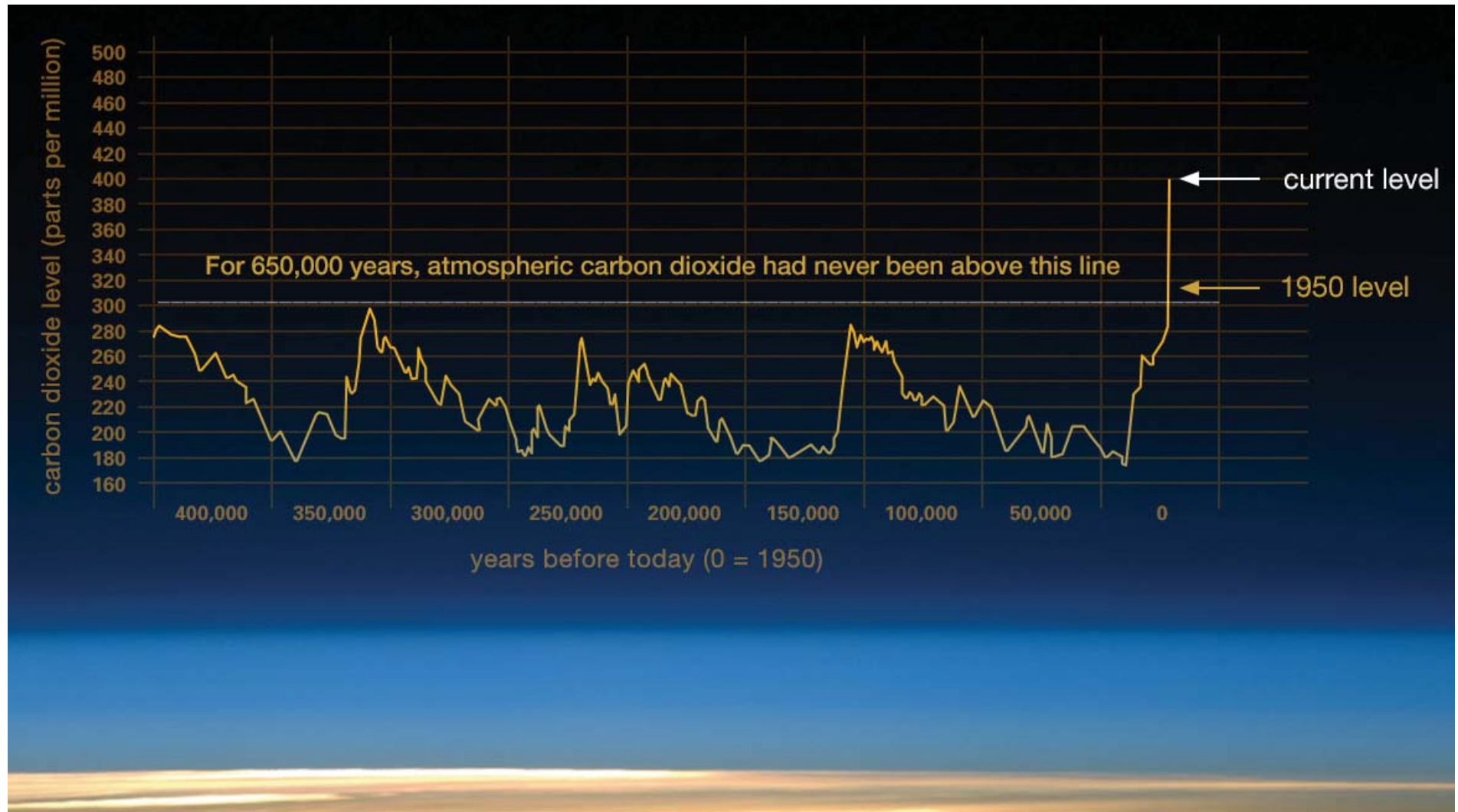


# Climate Change

## Inter-Government Panel On Climate Change

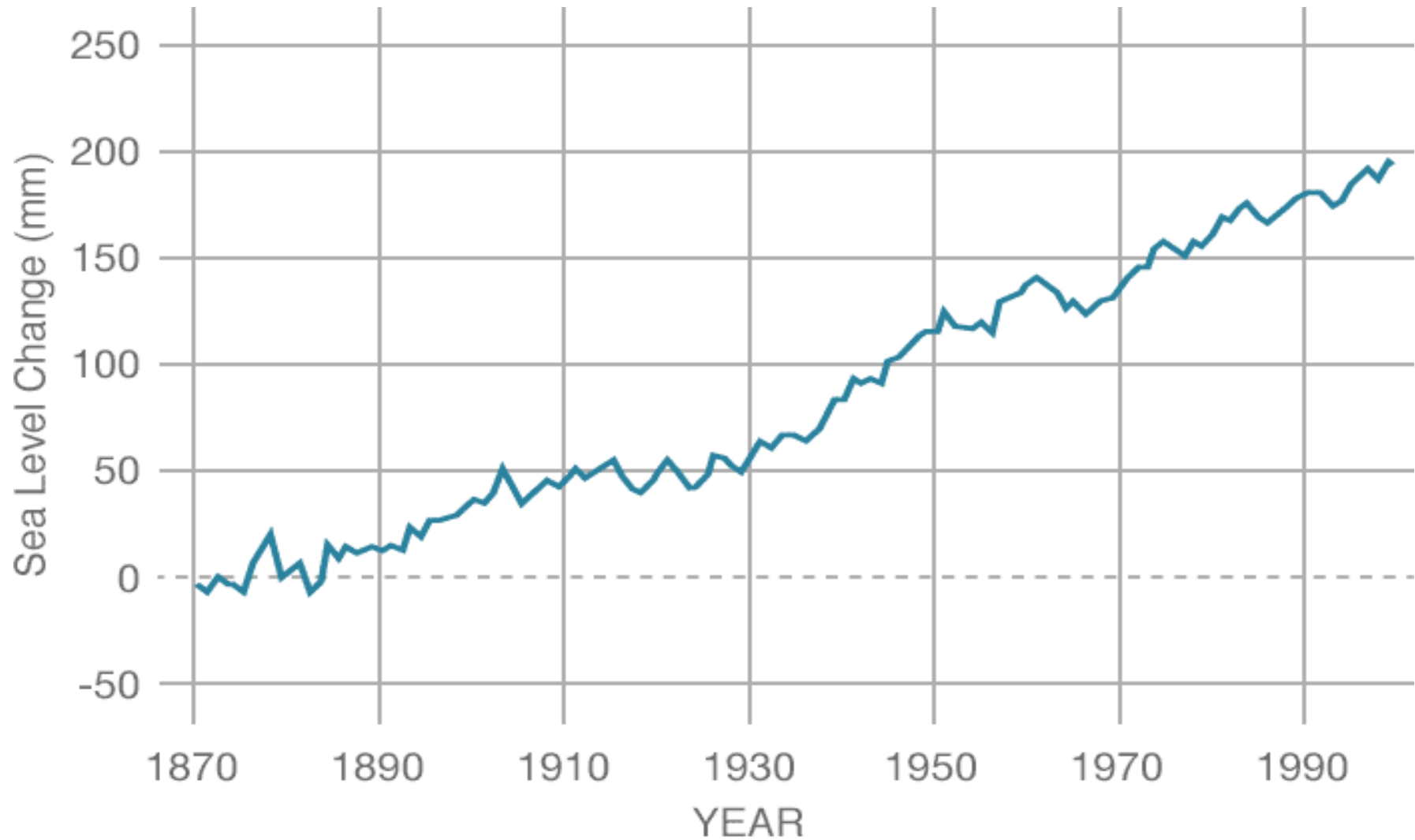


1. 95% certainty the human activity is responsible for climate change
2. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is at an unprecedented level
3. Sea level is set to continue to rise at a rate faster than it has risen in the last 40 years
4. Over the last two decades, the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have been melting and glaciers have been receding in most parts of the world



# Climate Change

## Coastal Tidal Gauge Data



- Global sea levels rose about 17 centimetres (6.7 inches) in the last century.
  - Rate in the last decade however is nearly double that of the last century.
  - Current measured trend of sea level rise is 3.22 mm a year.
- Most of the warming since 1880 has occurred post 1970:
  - 20 warmest years occurring since 1981
  - All 10 of the warmest years occurring in the past 12 years.
- Number of record high temperature events in the US has been increasing, while the number of record low temperature events has been decreasing - since 1950.



# Climate Change

## Impact on Developing Countries



### Effects:

- Higher temperatures
- Changes in precipitation patterns
- Rising sea levels
- More frequent weather-related disasters—posing risks for agriculture, food, and water supplies.

### Developing countries hit hardest

India: 2012 power failure – 670 million people affected

# Climate Change

## USA - Projections

### Northwest:

- Changes in timing of streamflow reduce water supplies for competing demands.
- Sea level rise, erosion, inundation and increasing ocean acidity.
- Increasing wildfire, insect outbreaks and tree diseases are causing widespread tree die-off.

### Midwest:

- Heavy downpours and flooding.
- Creating risks for the Great Lakes and affecting infrastructure, health, agriculture, transportation and air and water quality.

### Northeast:

- Heatwaves, downpours and sea level rise affecting infrastructure, agriculture, fisheries and ecosystems



### Southwest:

- Drought and insect outbreaks.
- Increase in wildfires.
- Reduced agricultural yields with flooding and erosion.

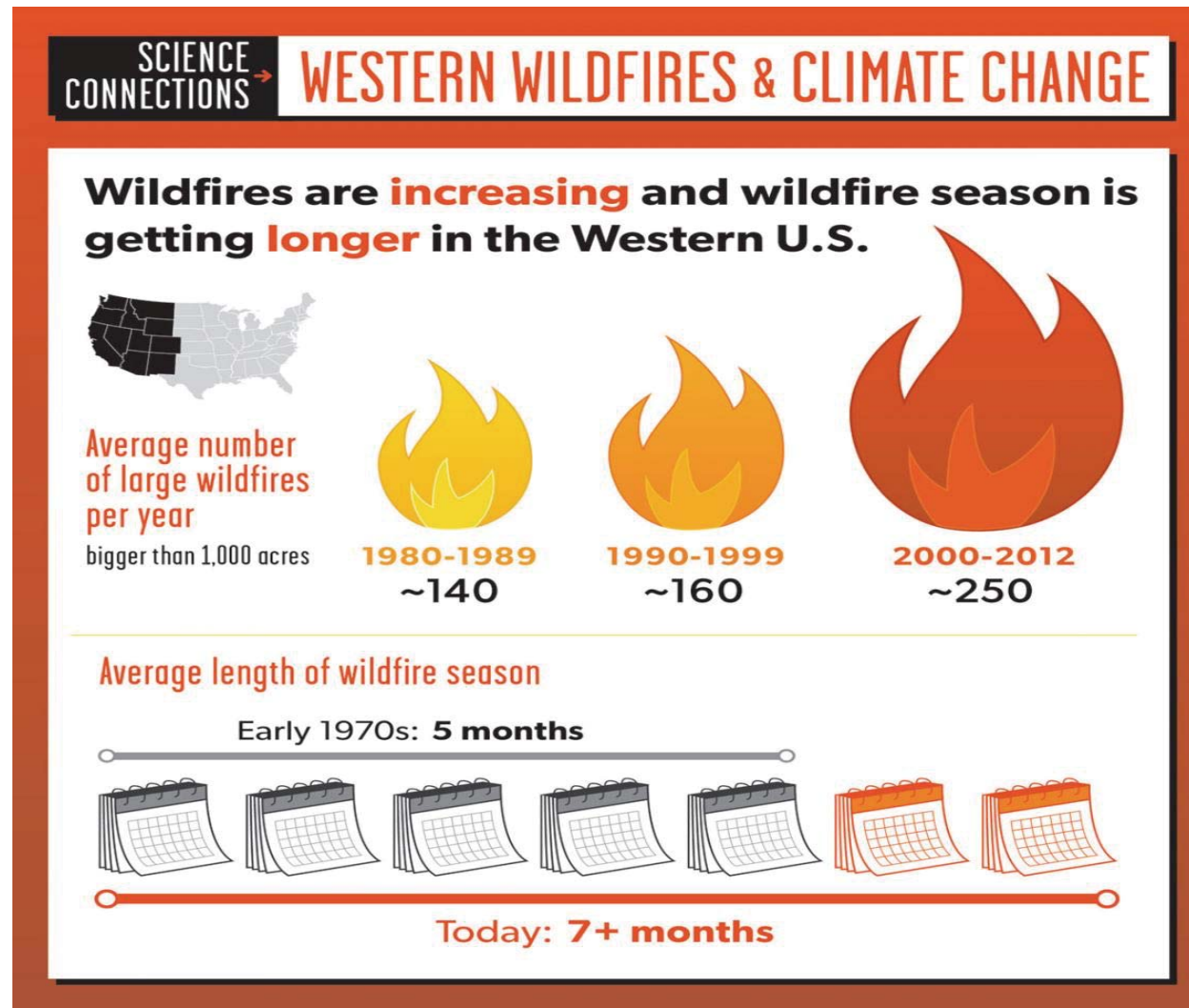
### Southeast:

- Increasing sea levels and rise in extreme heat.
- Poses health, energy, agriculture, environment and economy risks.
- Decreased water availability.

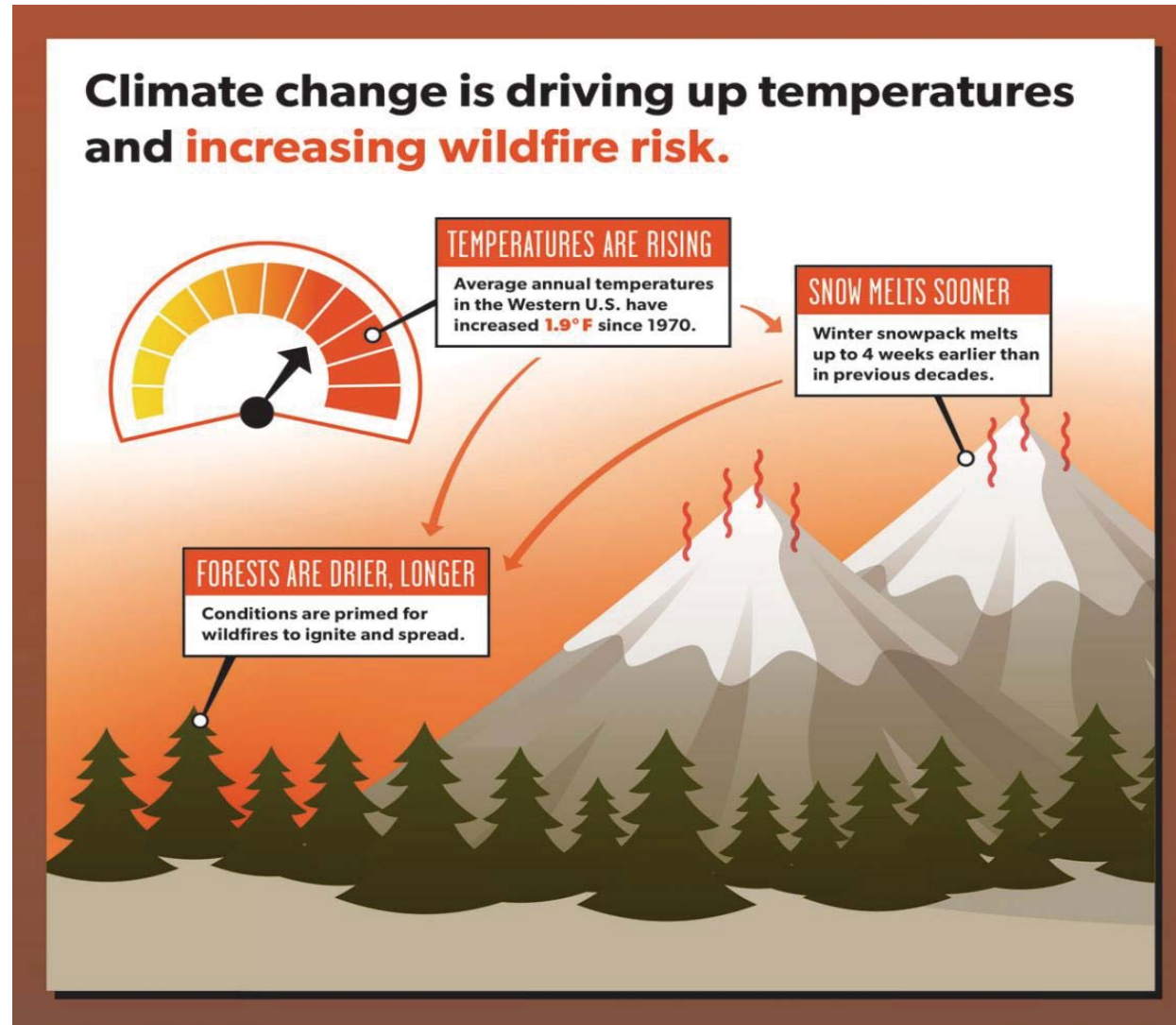


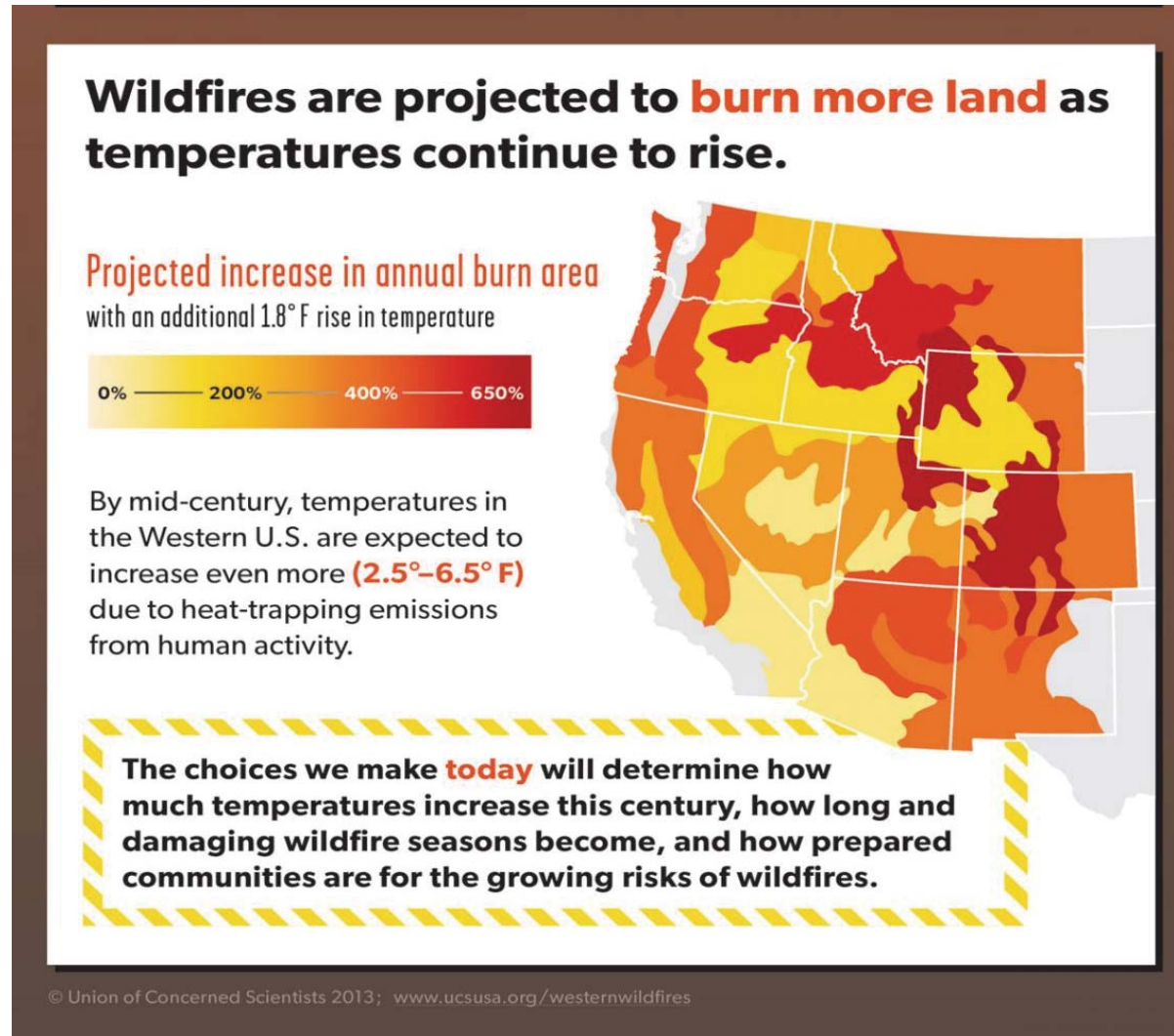
Source: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/09/1409019-california-wildfires-king-fire-drought-climate-change/>





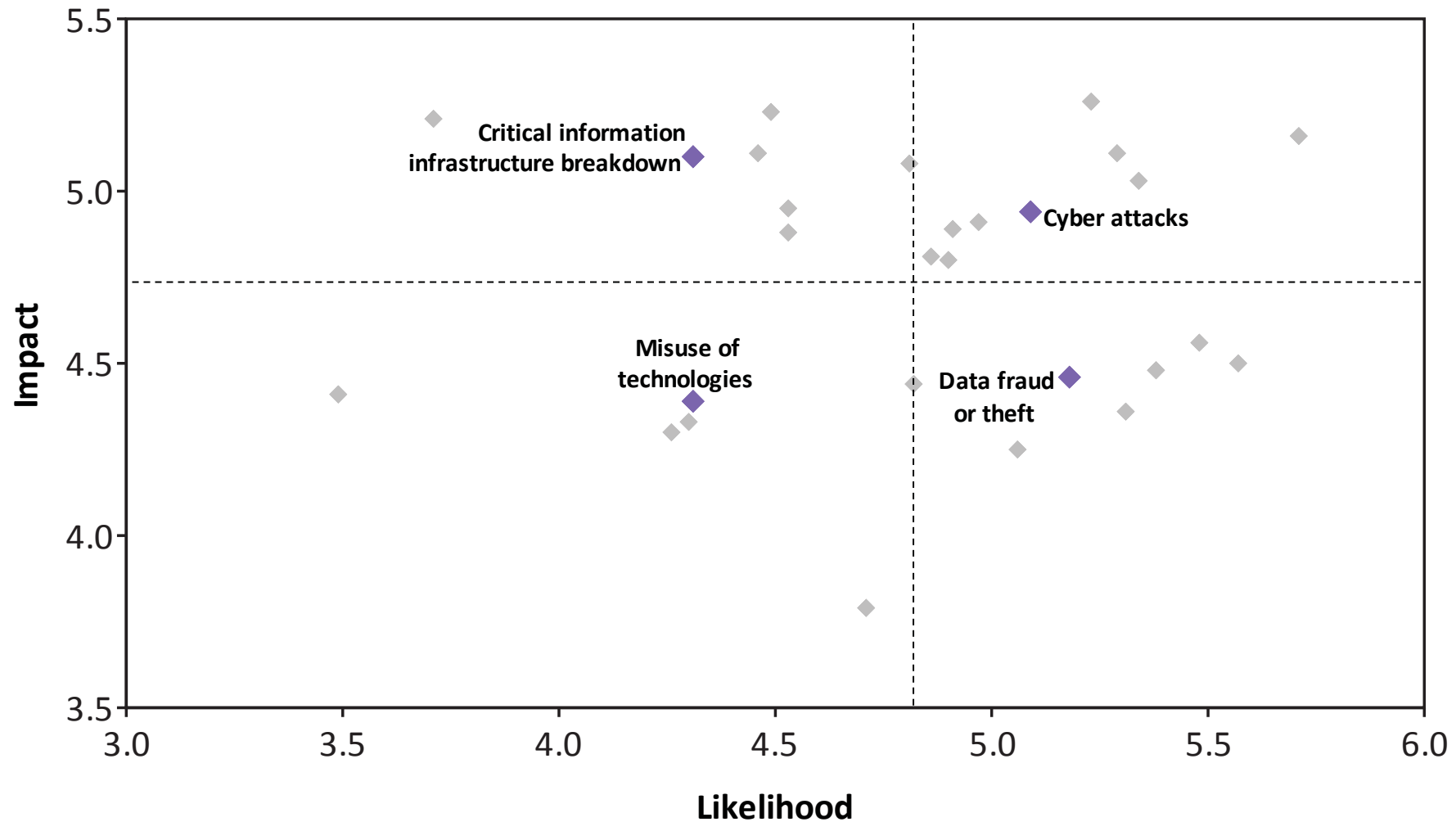






# Impending Challenges

Technological



# Technology Dependence

## The 2003 Northeast Blackout



**Affected 55 million people**



# Technology Dependence

## The 2003 Northeast Blackout



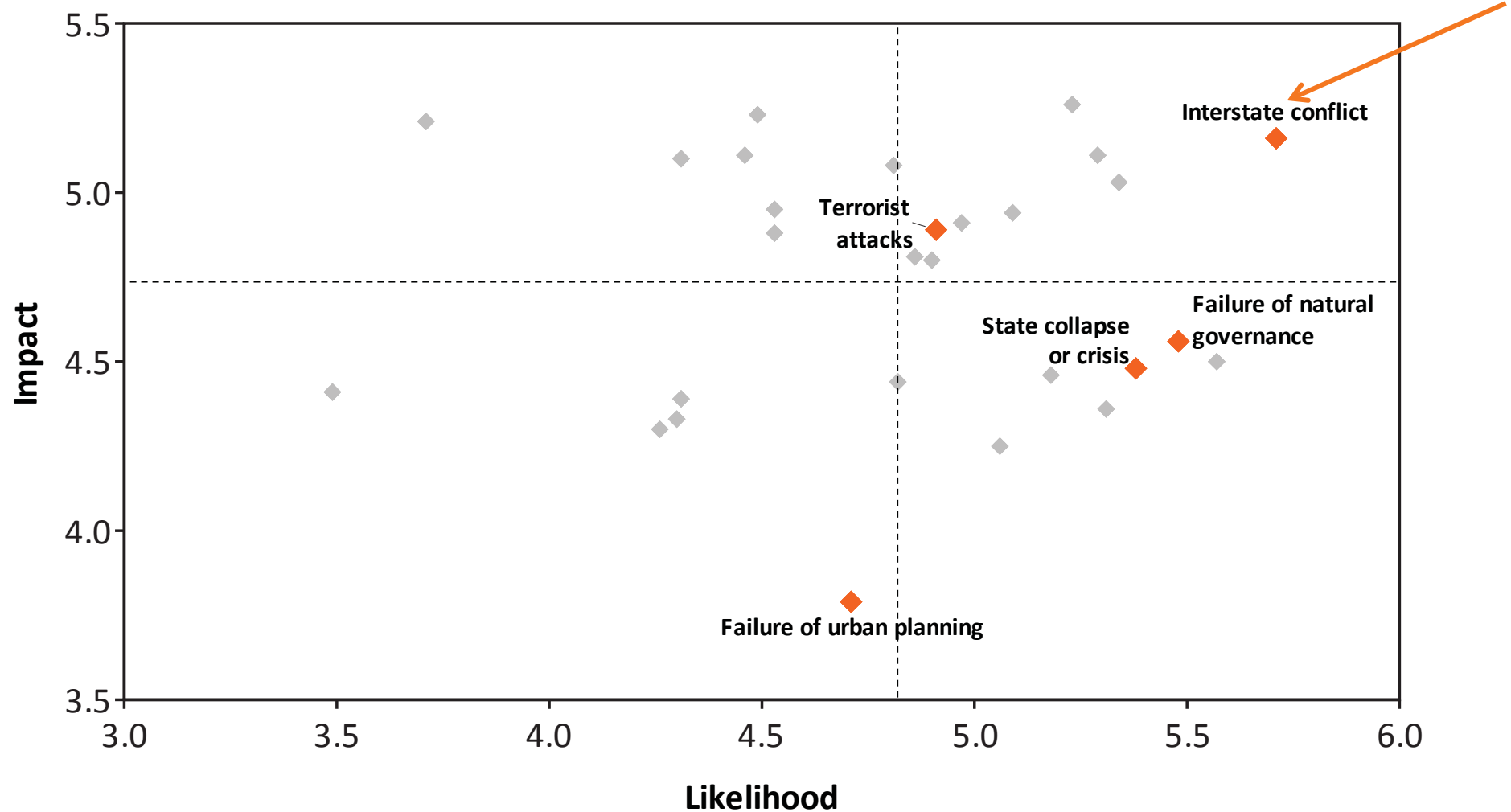
- Power System Outage Task Force: many systems and control mechanisms remain susceptible to danger of cyber attack:
  - “increased vulnerability to disruption via cyber means faced by North America’s critical infrastructure sectors...”
- Wide-spread power outages affected all areas of infrastructure:
  - rail networks
  - air travel
  - cellular communications
  - oil/ fuel production & sale
  - productive industry
  - water supply

Source: [http://media.treehugger.com/assets/images/2012/07/20120731-india-power-lines.jpg.650x0\\_q70\\_crop-smart.jpg](http://media.treehugger.com/assets/images/2012/07/20120731-india-power-lines.jpg.650x0_q70_crop-smart.jpg)

Full Task Force Report: <http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/oeprod/DocumentsandMedia/BlackoutFinal-Web.pdf>

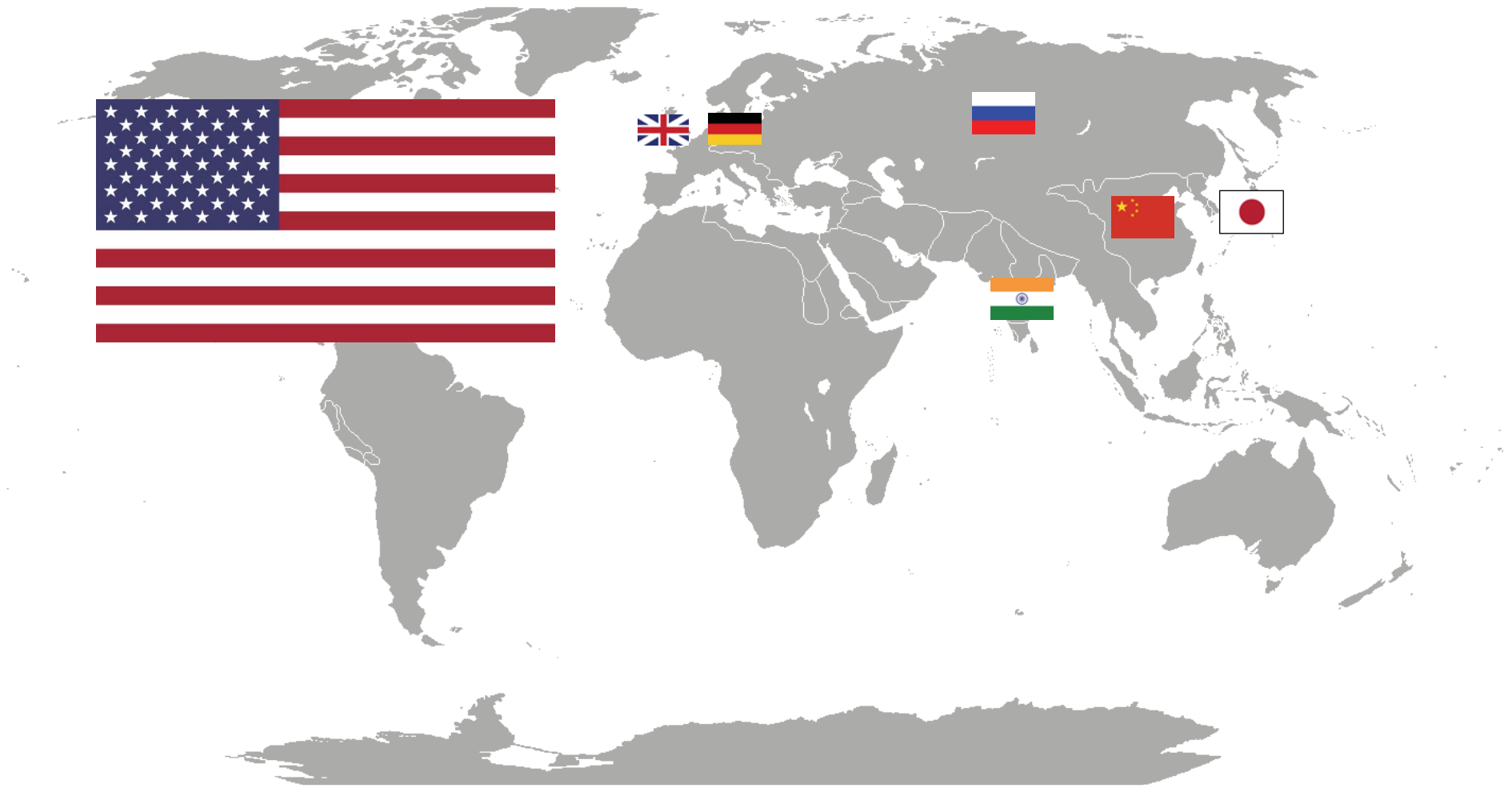
# Impending Challenges

Geopolitical



# Geopolitical Instability

## The One-Player Game – Peaceful Hegemony



# Geopolitical Instability

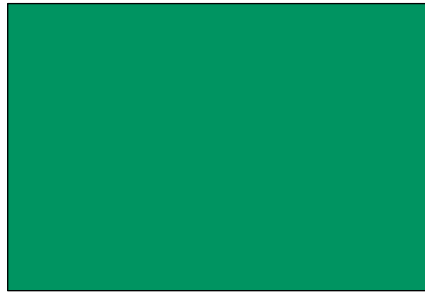
## The Two-Player Game – Stable Balancing





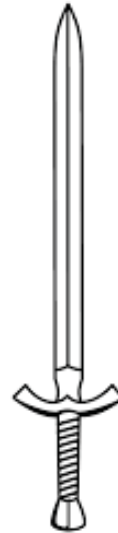
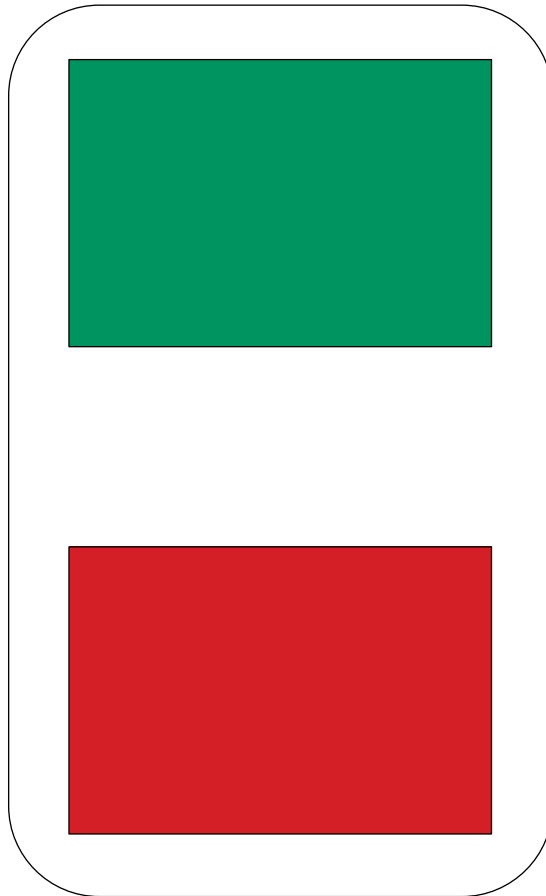
# Geopolitical Instability

## The Three-Player Game – Unstable



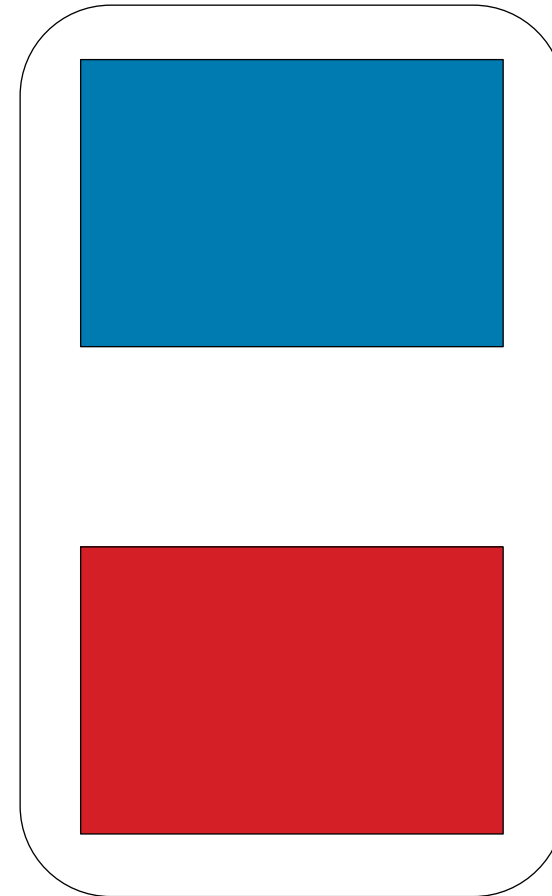
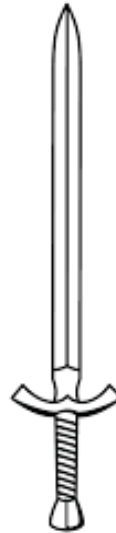
# Geopolitical Instability

## The Three-Player Game – Unstable



# Geopolitical Instability

## The Three-Player Game – Unstable



# Geopolitical Instability

## The Three-Player Game – Unstable



# Geopolitical Instability

Crimean War - 1853



Neutral Or Uninvolved



Years: 2

Killed: 150,000

# Geopolitical Instability

Austro-Prussian War - 1866



## Neutral Or Uninvolved



Months 2

Killed: 100,000

:

# Geopolitical Instability

Franco-Prussian War - 1870



## Neutral Or Uninvolved



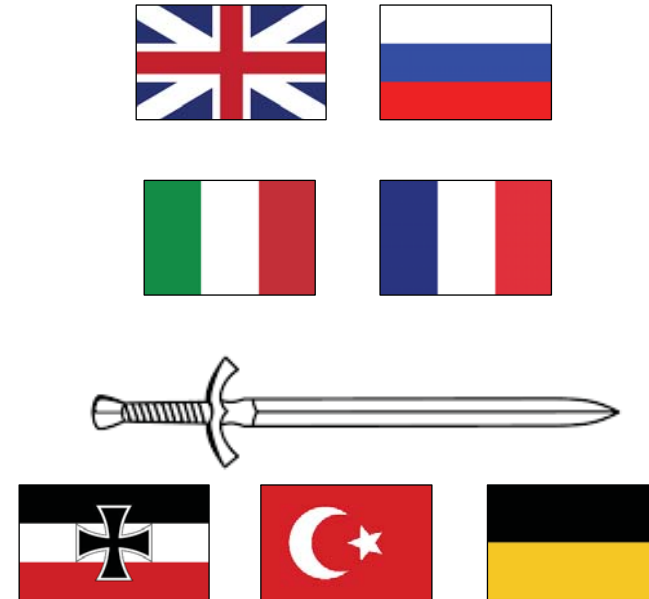
Years: 2

Killed: 150,000



# Geopolitical Instability

WWI- 1914



Neutral Or Uninvolved

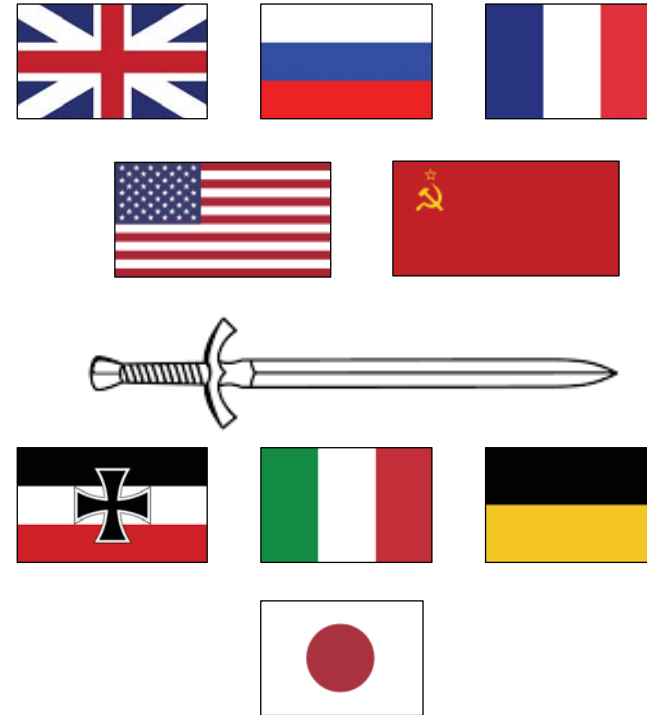


Years: 4

Killed: 17 Million

# Geopolitical Instability

WWII- 1939



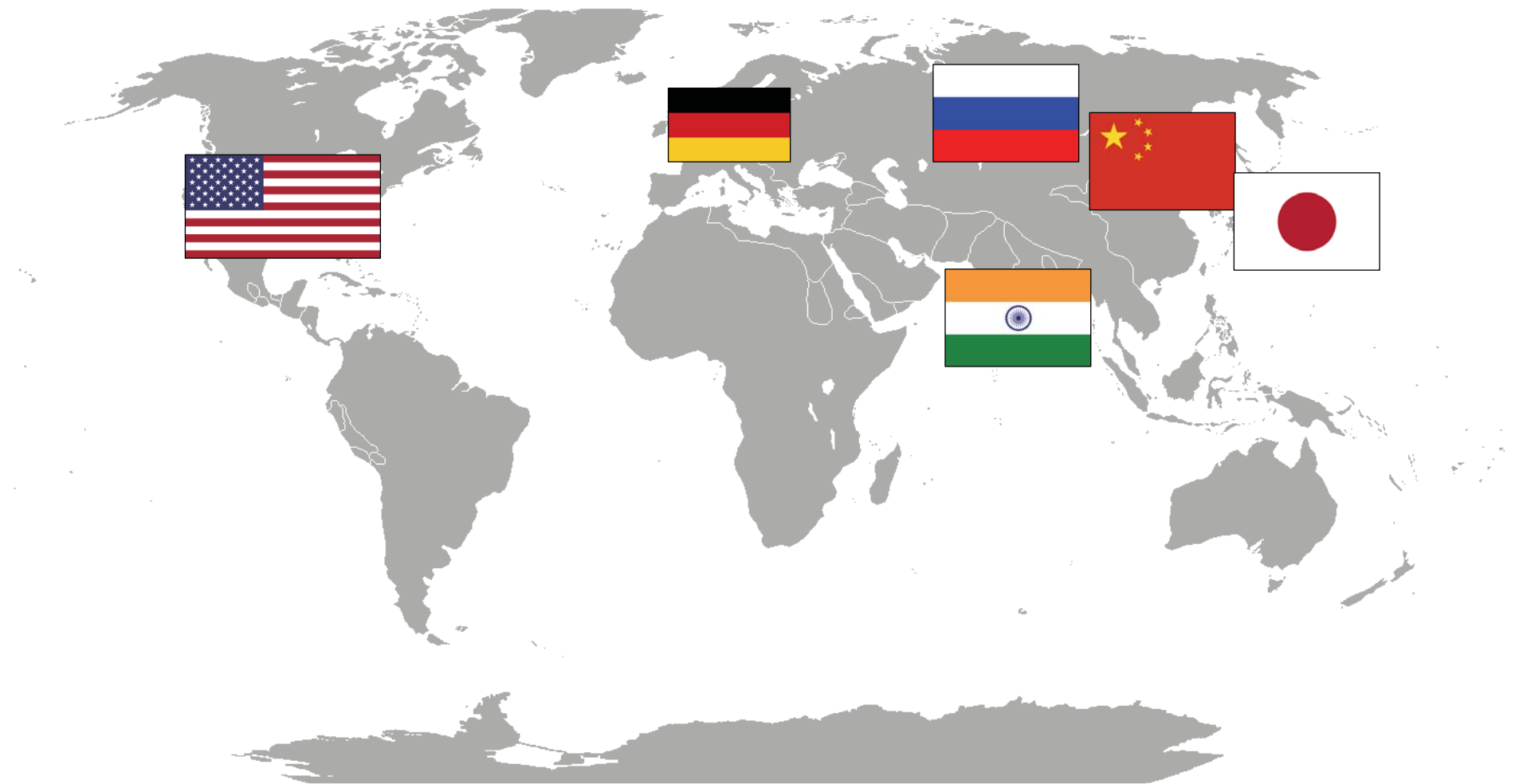
Neutral Or Uninvolved



Years: 5 Killed: 70 Million

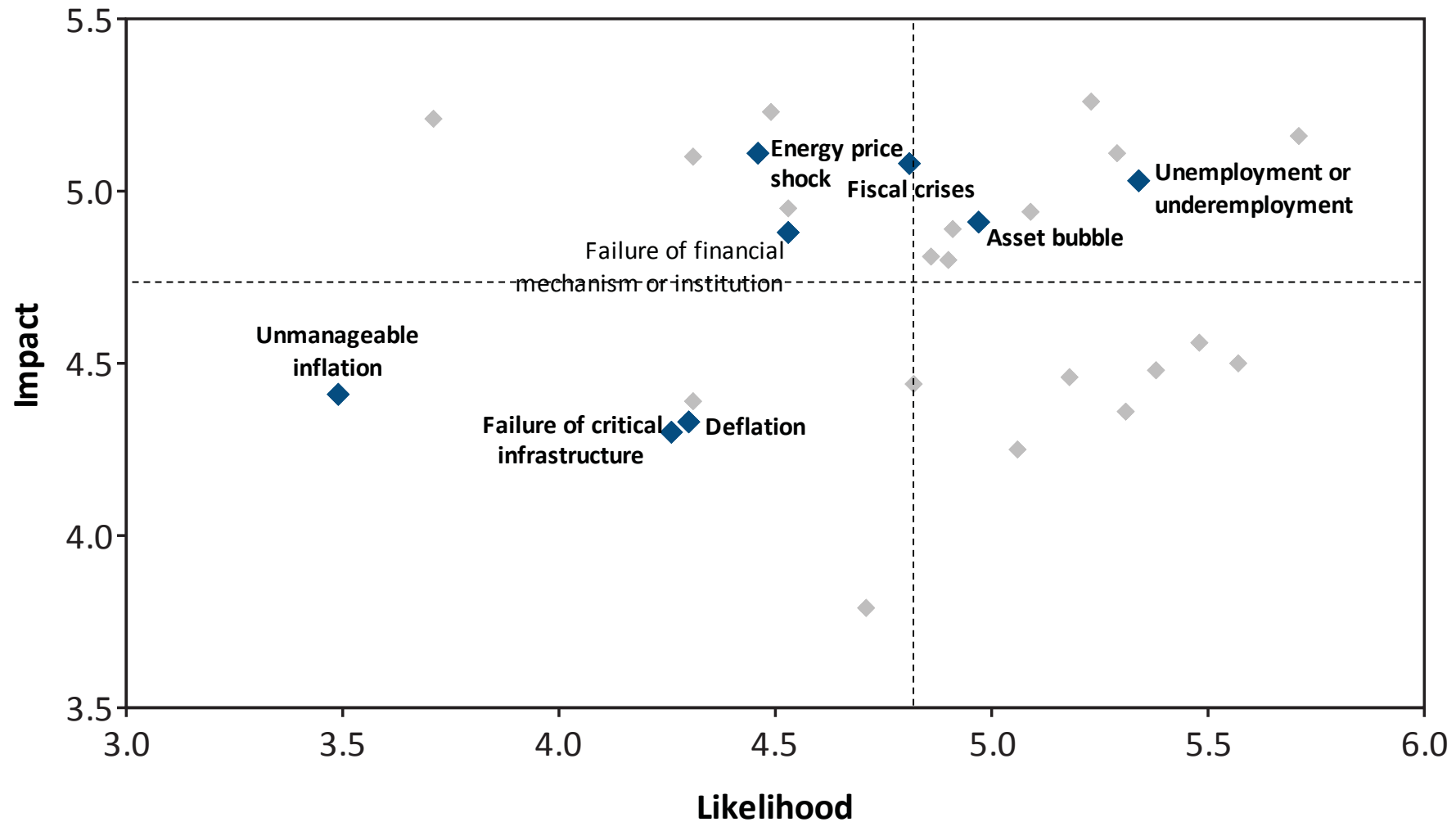
# Geopolitical Instability

Multi-Player Game, with many great powers



# Impending Challenges

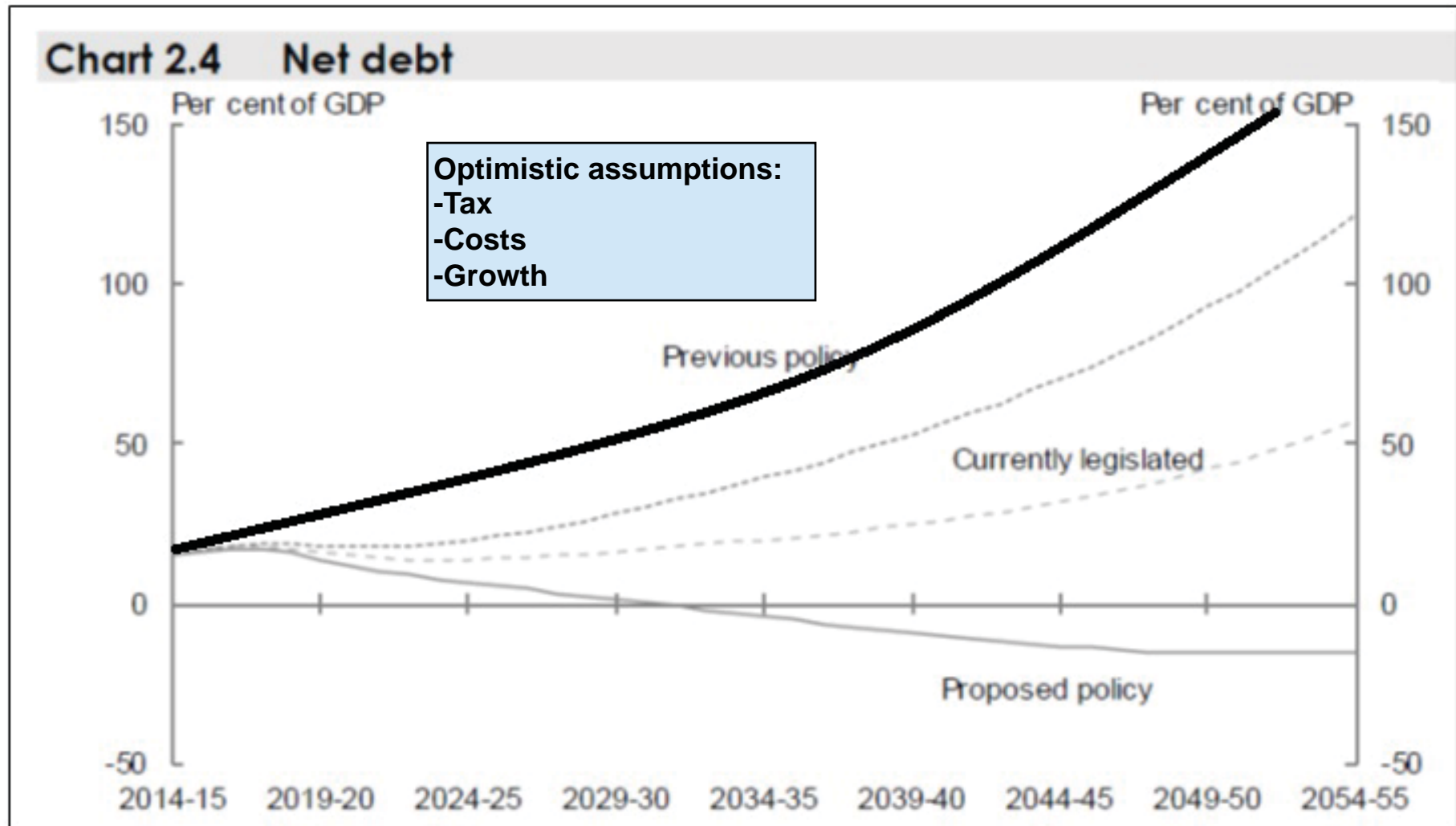
Economic



# Government Policy

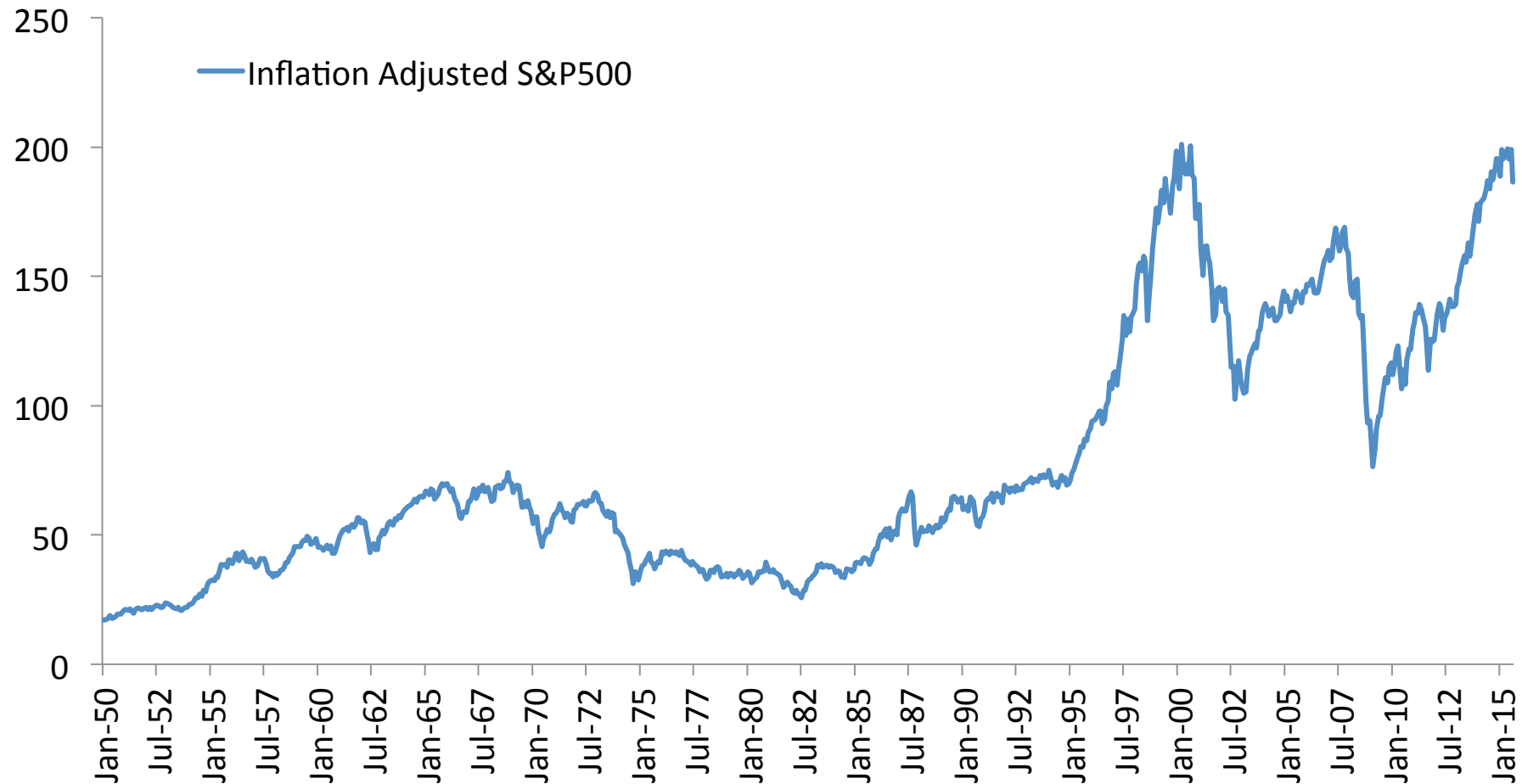
Short Term Focus





Indexed

### Stock Market 1950-2015



Source: Strategic Economic Decisions 2015, *1981-2015: The Most Remarkable Stock Market of the Past Century*, viewed 17/9/2015,

<http://www.sedinc.com/past-profile-reports-organized-by-date.html?year=2015&month=3&start=0>

Yahoo Finance 2015, *S&P500*, viewed 19/8/2015,

<https://finance.yahoo.com/q/hp?s=%5EGSPC&a=00&b=3&c=1950&d=08&e=18&f=2015&q=m>

US Inflation Calculator 2015, *Historical Inflation Rates 1914-2015*, viewed 18/9/2015,

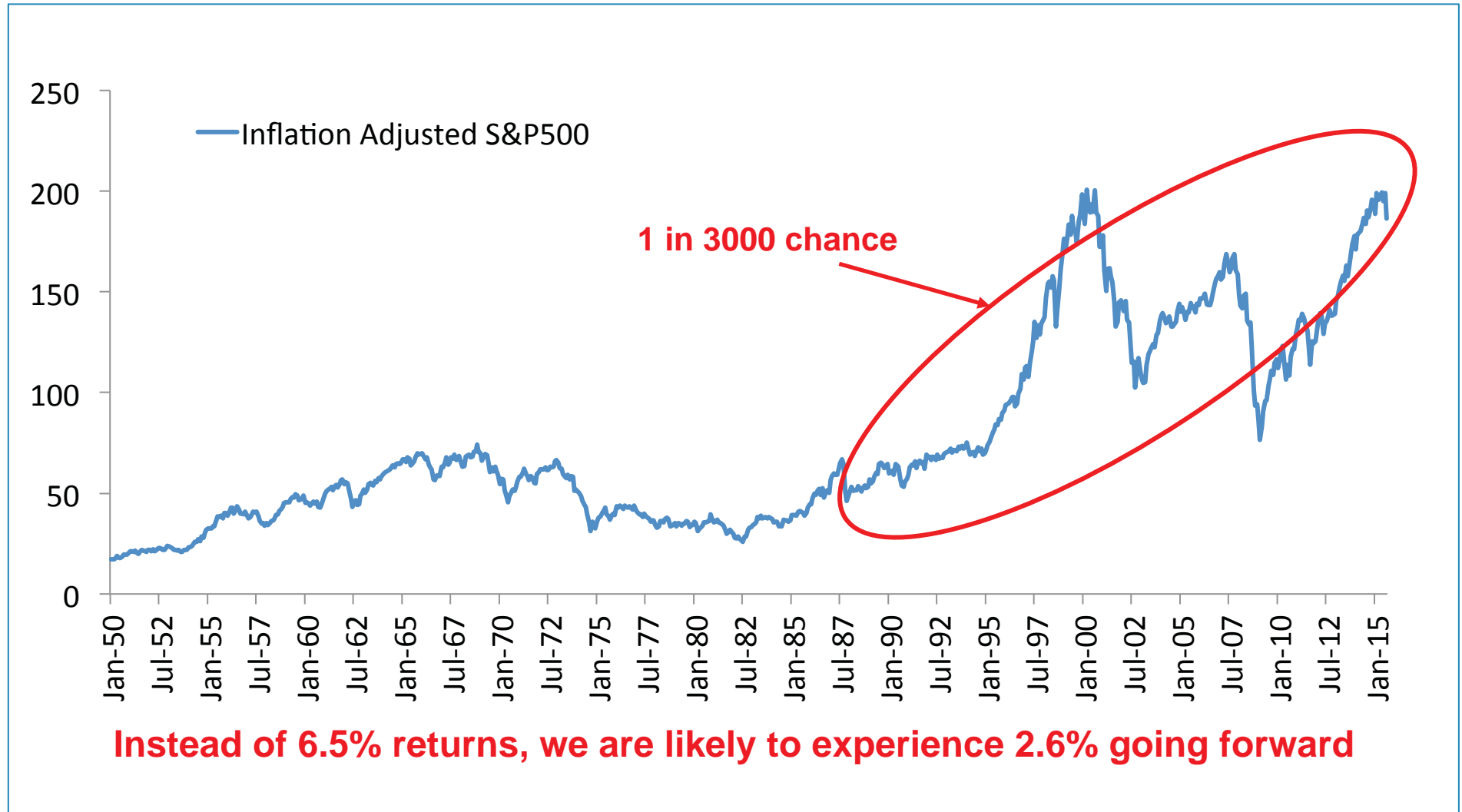
<http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/historical-inflation-rates/>



# Government Policy

Driven by False Expectations





Source: Strategic Economic Decisions 2015, *1981-2015: The Most Remarkable Stock Market of the Past Century*, viewed 17/9/2015,

<http://www.sedinc.com/past-profile-reports-organized-by-date.html?year=2015&month=3&start=0>

Yahoo Finance 2015, *S&P500*, viewed 19/8/2015,

<https://finance.yahoo.com/q/hp?s=%5EGSPC&a=00&b=3&c=1950&d=08&e=18&f=2015&q=m>

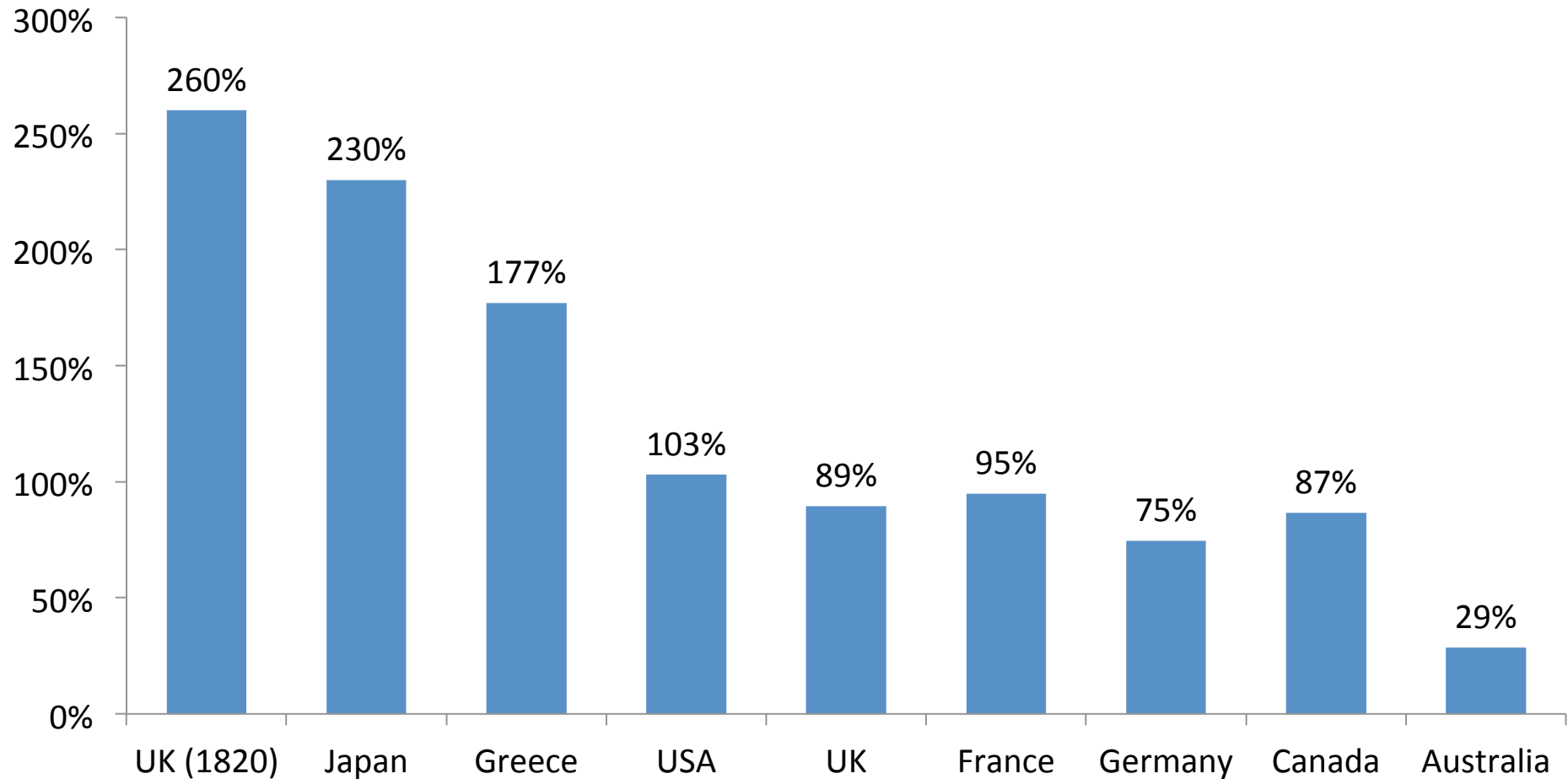
US Inflation Calculator 2015, *Historical Inflation Rates 1914-2015*, viewed 18/9/2015,

<http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/historical-inflation-rates/>

# Government Policy

Leading to High Indebtedness

% of GDP



Source: Trading Economics 2015, *Country List Government Debt to GDP*, viewed 22/9/2015,  
<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/country-list/government-debt-to-gdp>

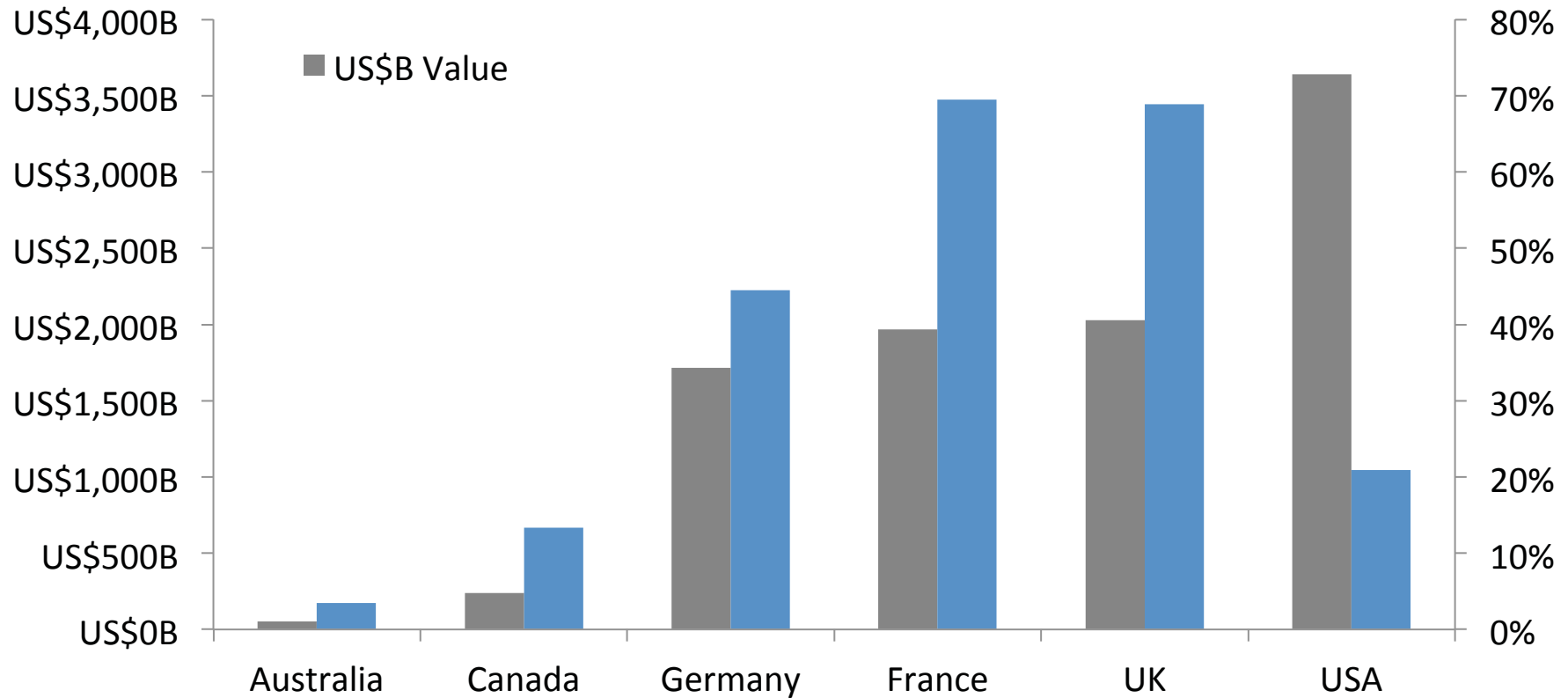
UK Public Spending 2015, *Time Series Chart of UK Public Spending*, viewed 22/9/2015,  
[http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/spending\\_chart\\_1692\\_20151UKp\\_XXs1li111mcn\\_G0t](http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/spending_chart_1692_20151UKp_XXs1li111mcn_G0t)



**US Central Budgetary Office: <1% of current debt  
re-invested in future Growth Projects**

# Government Policy

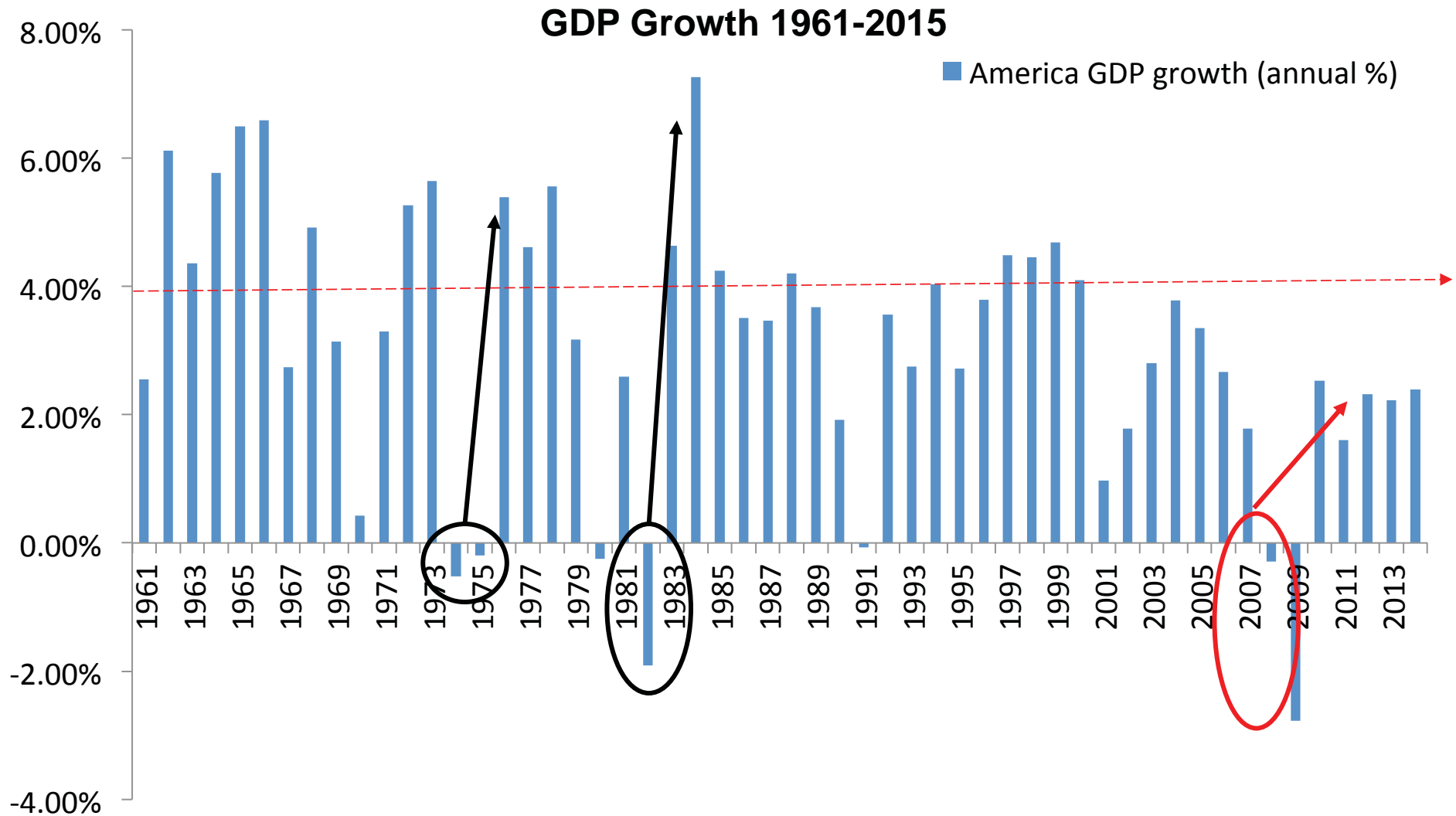
## Unfunded Future Pension Promises



Source: National Accounts

# Government Policy

## And Secular Stagnation



Source: The World Bank 2015, *GDP Growth (annual %)*, viewed 21/9/2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>

# Secular Stagnation

Limited Funding





# Secular Stagnation

Increasing Numbers of Old People



# Secular Stagnation

The Patient Punch Drunk and Uncertain



Janet Yellen: “Why isn’t this lever working?”

**Emergency treatment helps survival but then misallocates spending and undermines confidence**

# Secular Stagnation

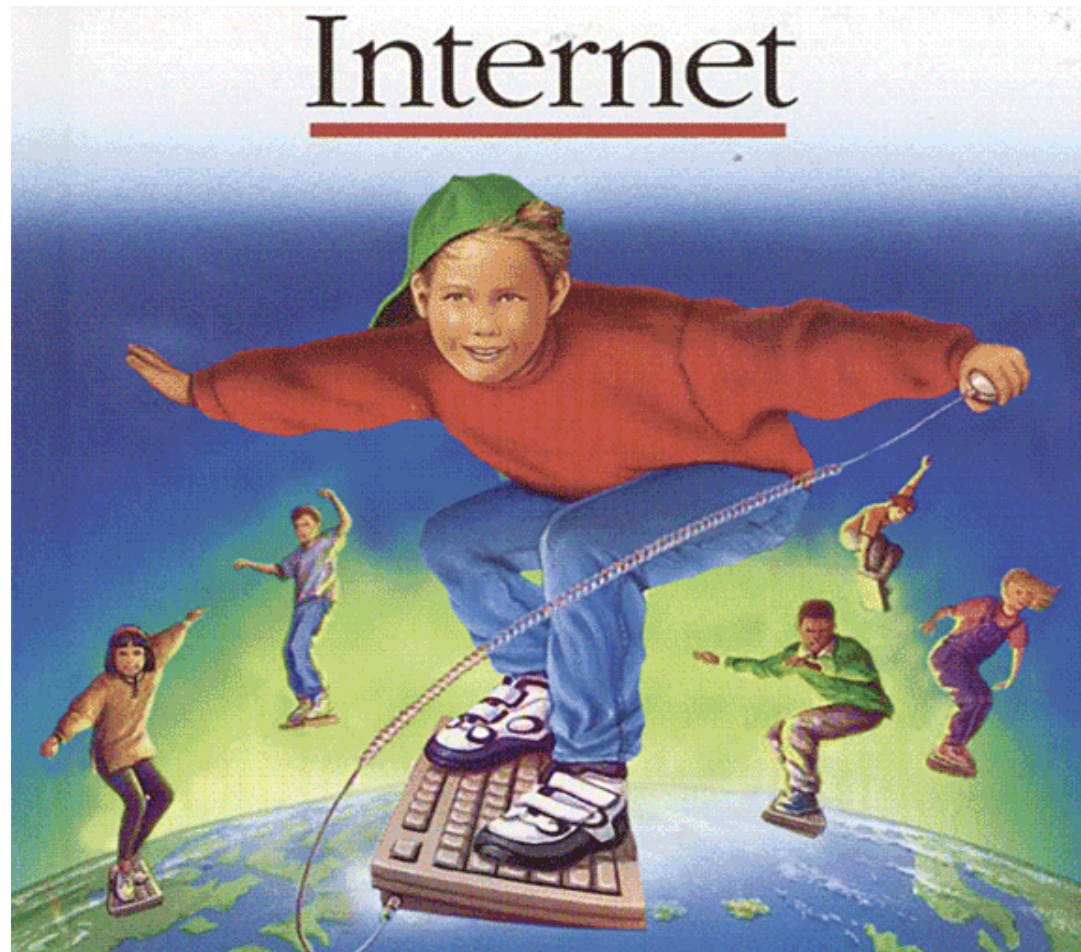
With Little Room to Move



**Rates can't go any lower**

# Secular Stagnation

Few New Big Ideas



**We need another 'internet boom'.**

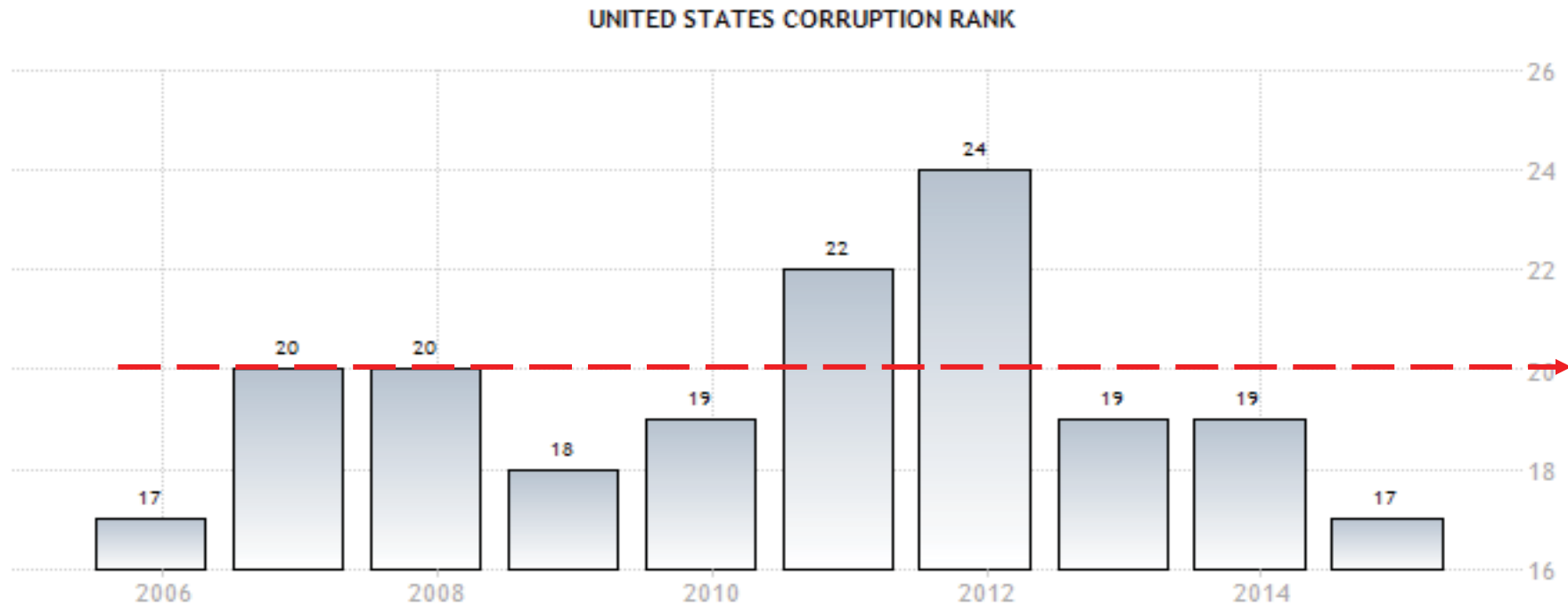


# Secular Stagnation

## Regulation and Defended Interest



**Number of permits needed to open a restaurant in NYC:  
increased from 2 to 15 during the past 40 years**



SOURCE: [WWW.TRADINGECONOMICS.COM](http://WWW.TRADINGECONOMICS.COM) | TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL

Source: Trading Economics 2015, *America – Economic Indicators*, viewed 21/9/2015,  
<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/united-states/indicators>  
Strategic Economic Decisions 2015, *Today's Global Market Correction*, viewed 24/9/2015,  
<http://www.sedinc.com/past-profile-reports-organized-by-date.html?year=2015&month=8&start=0>

# Secular Stagnation

## Political Standstill

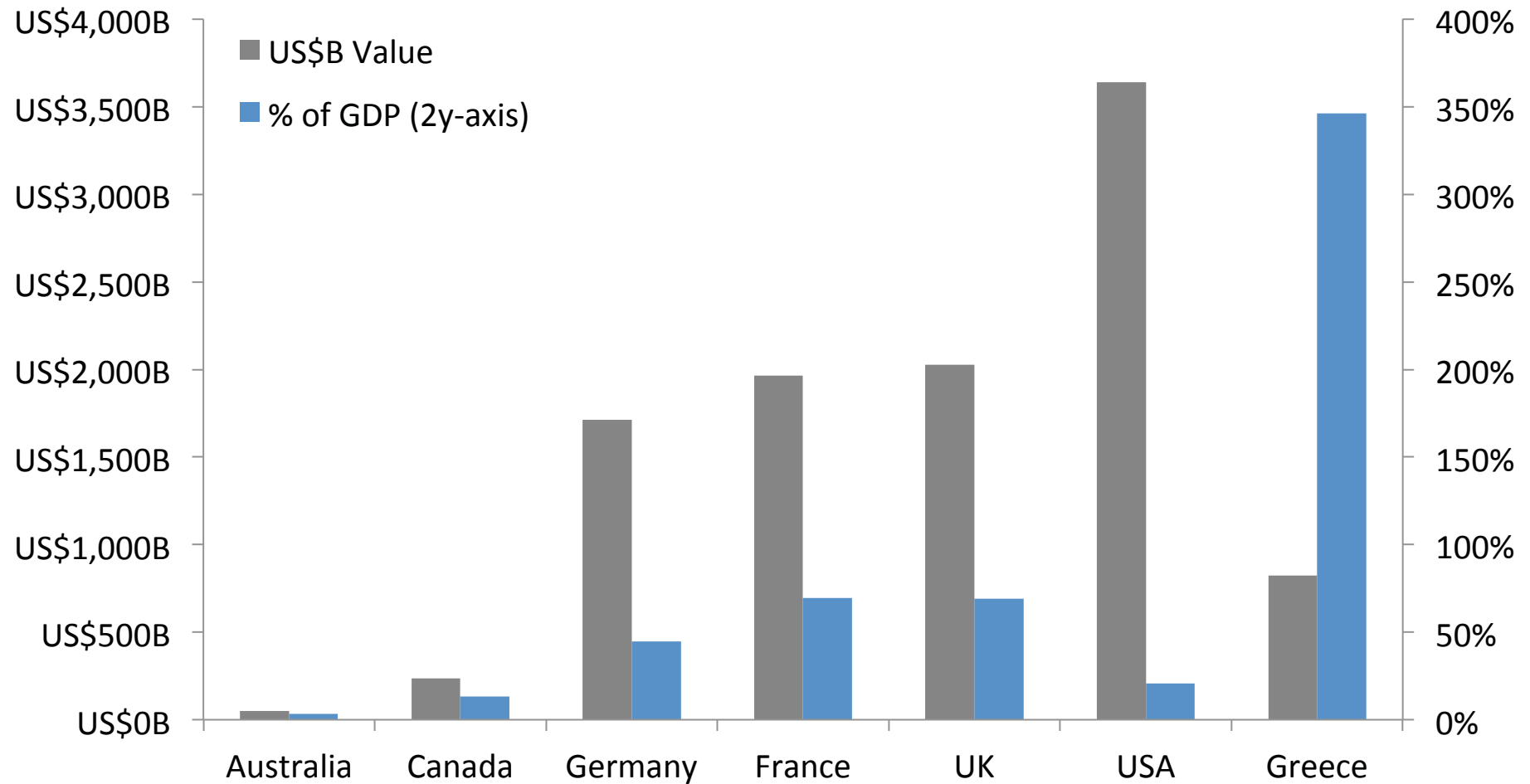


## Political Polarisation



# Case Example: Greece

## Unfunded Pension Liabilities



## Poor Management/Dishonesty

1. Spending a lot more than they were earning in tax revenues

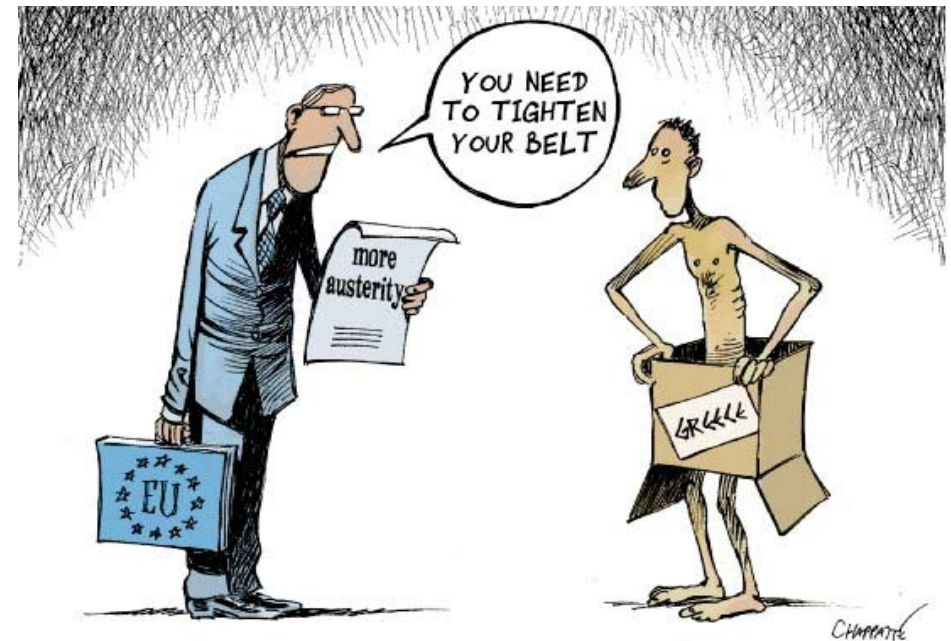


2. Lied about fiscal position to join the EU



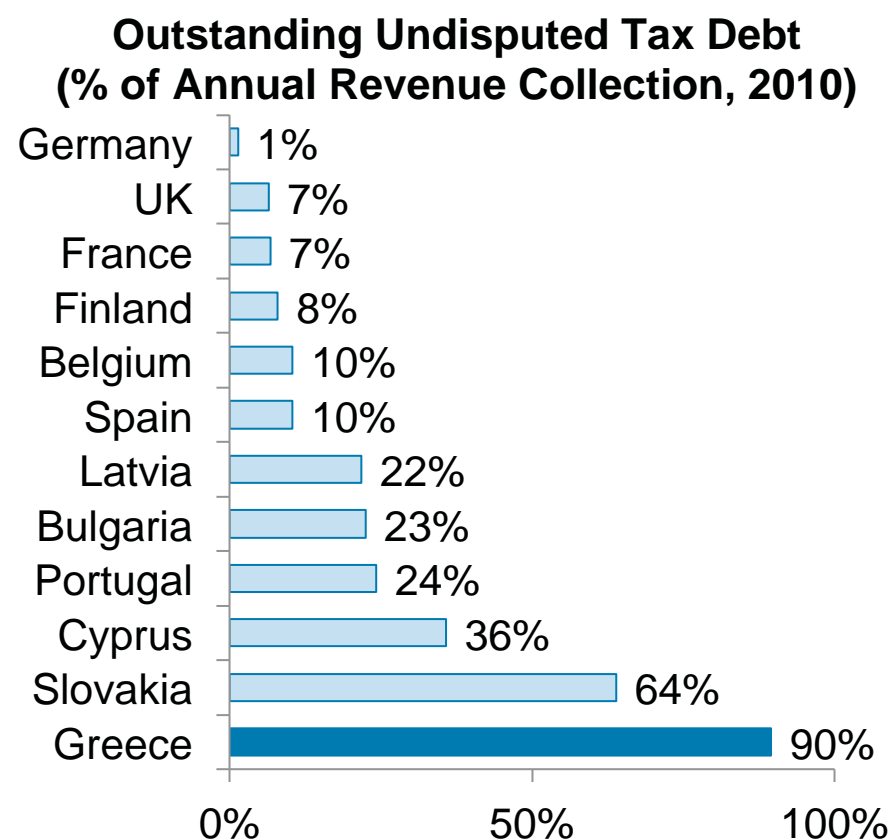
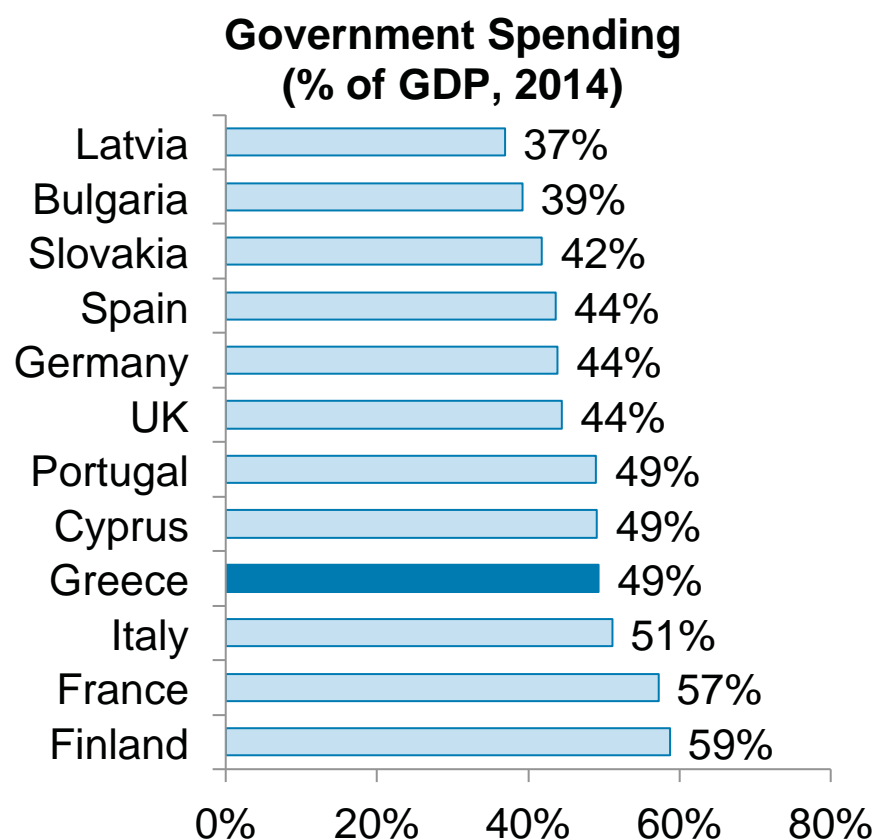
## Economic Collapse/Lack of Effective Response

3. In 2009 they fell into recession, and in 2012 the EU bailed them out
4. Greece has been playing hardball with the EU ever since – taking on more debt...



## High Government Spend / Inefficient Collection

## High Public Sector Spending (% GDP) And Horrible Tax Collection

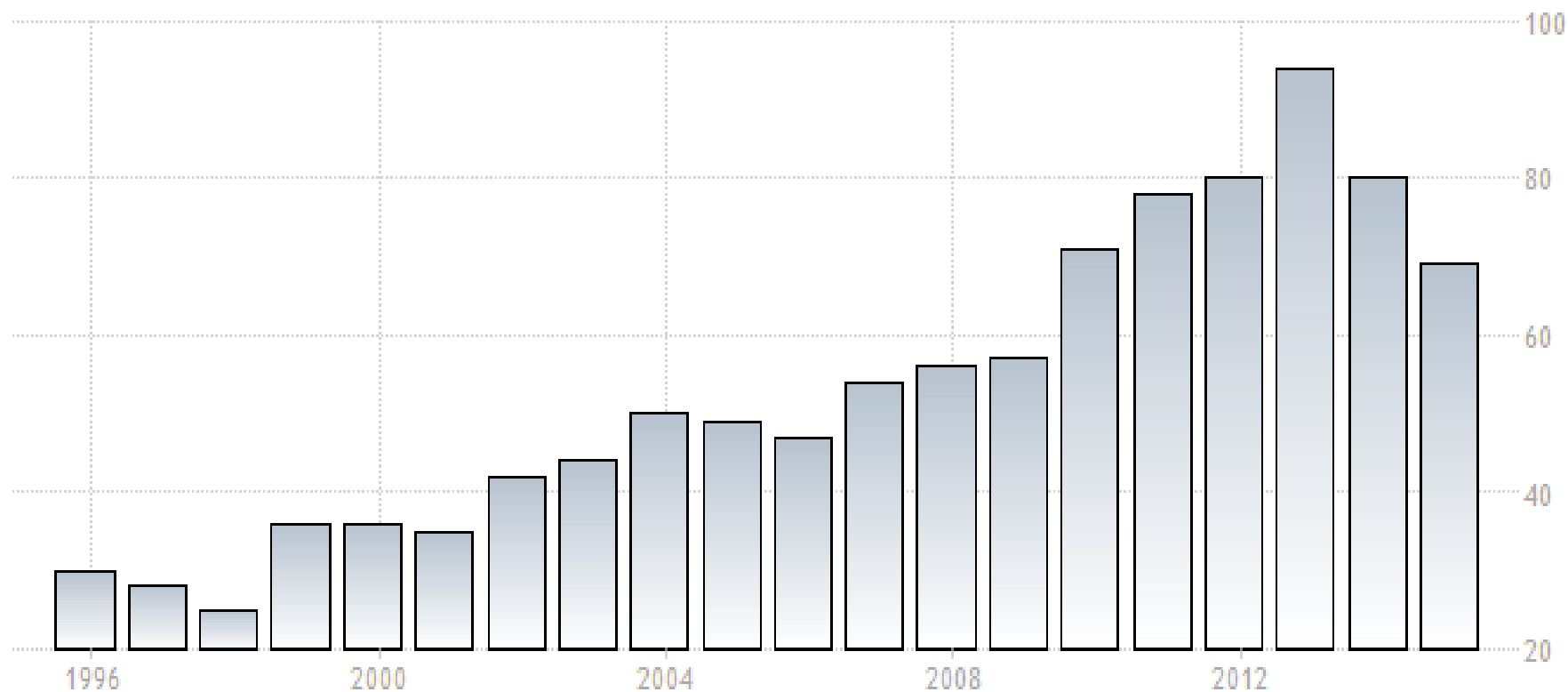


## A Culture of Entitlement

### Why Has Greece Constantly Had Such High Public Deficits?

- Widespread tax fraud
- Exorbitant salaries of civil servants
- One million civil servants in a country of 11 million people
- Professionals retire at age 50-55
- Unmarried daughters of civil servants inherit their parents' pension even if they have not contributed. Result: the daughters do not get married (legally)
- Fraud in the collection of pension (family of dead pensioners still receive money, invalidity pensions obtained with bribes, etc)
- The first €17 billion of earnings of shipowners are exempt from paying taxes (guaranteed by an article of the Greek constitution)
- The high interest payments on the debt until it produced the second bailout in 2012

GREECE CORRUPTION RANK

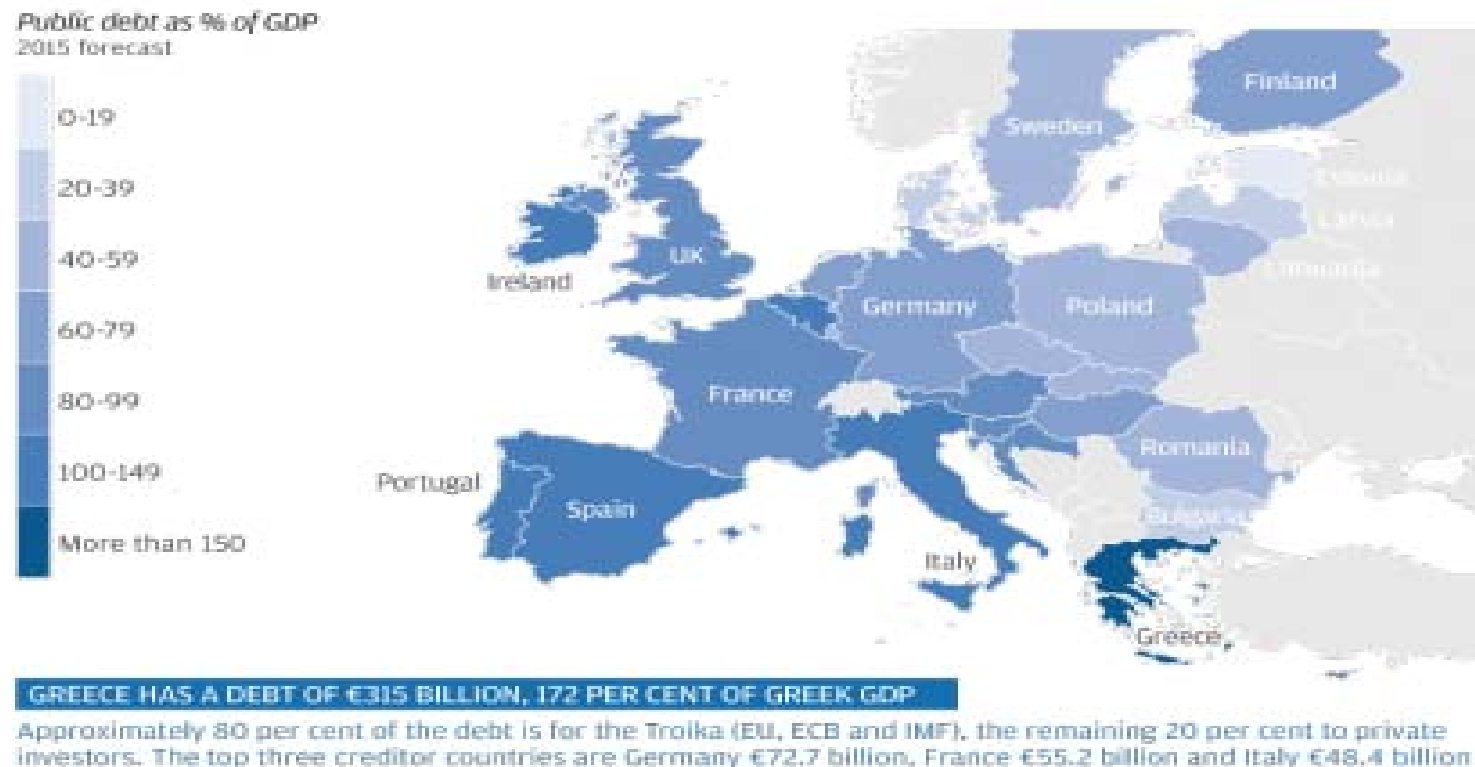


SOURCE: WWW.TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL

## Unsustainable Debt

**Greece's Debt-To-GDP Ratio Is A Staggering 177%**

Financial markets no longer consider Greece as debt-worthy, therefore won't lend at rates Greece can afford, therefore Greece cannot keep up payments to service its current debts while carrying out basic government functions



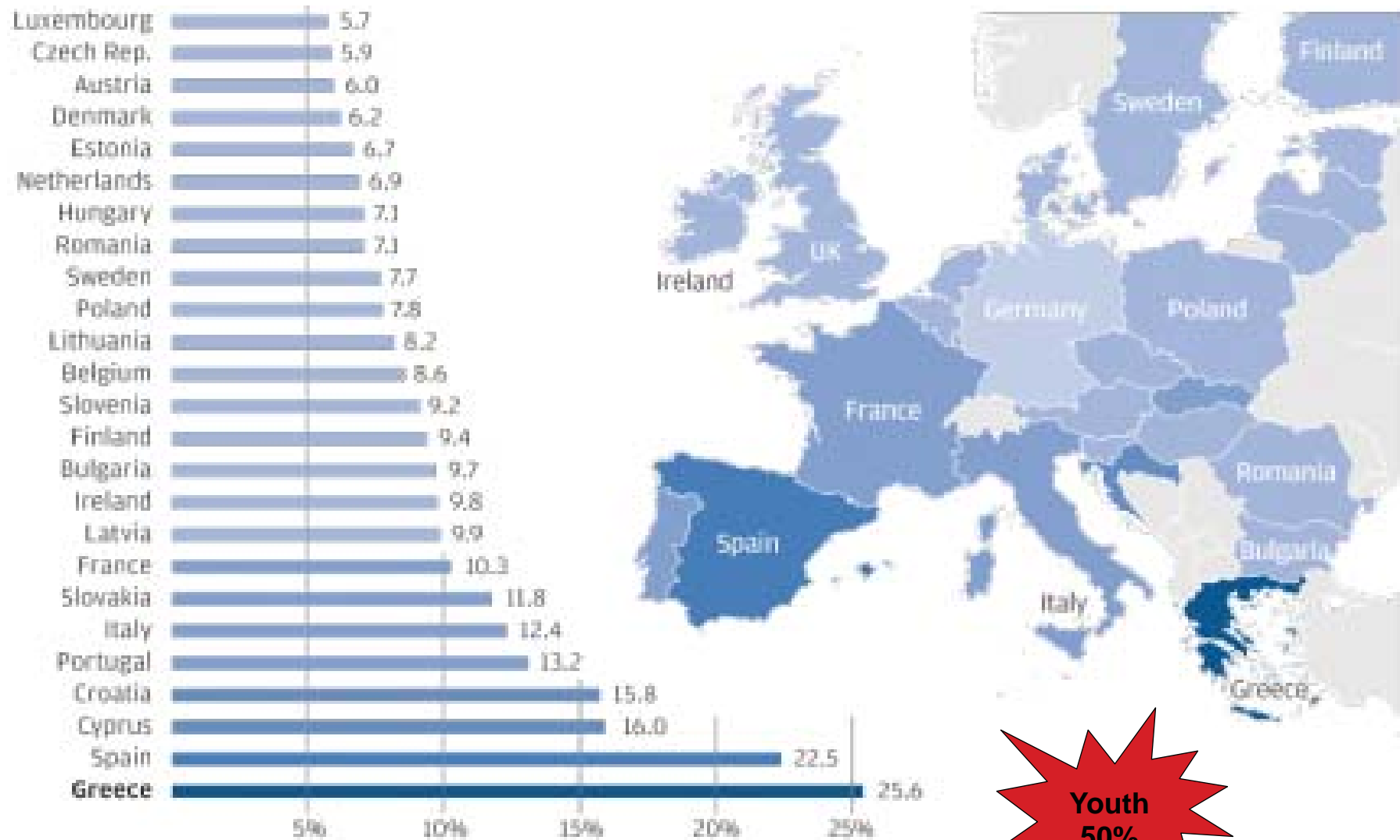


# Greece

## Economic Collapse

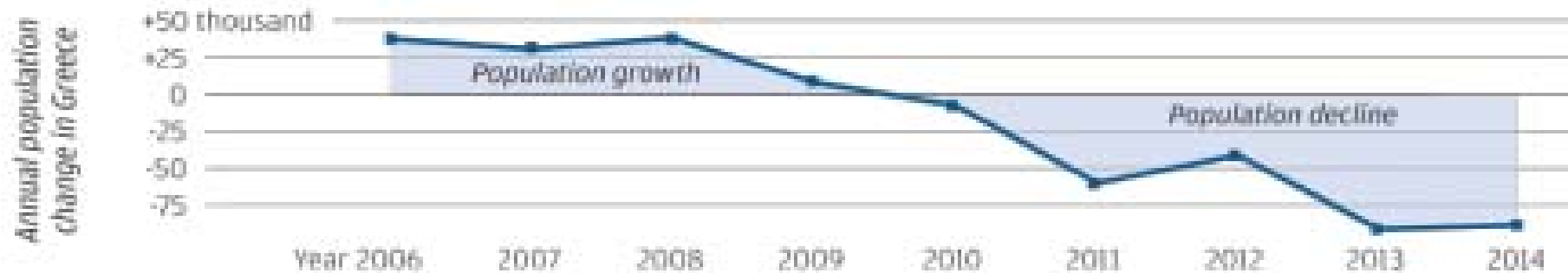


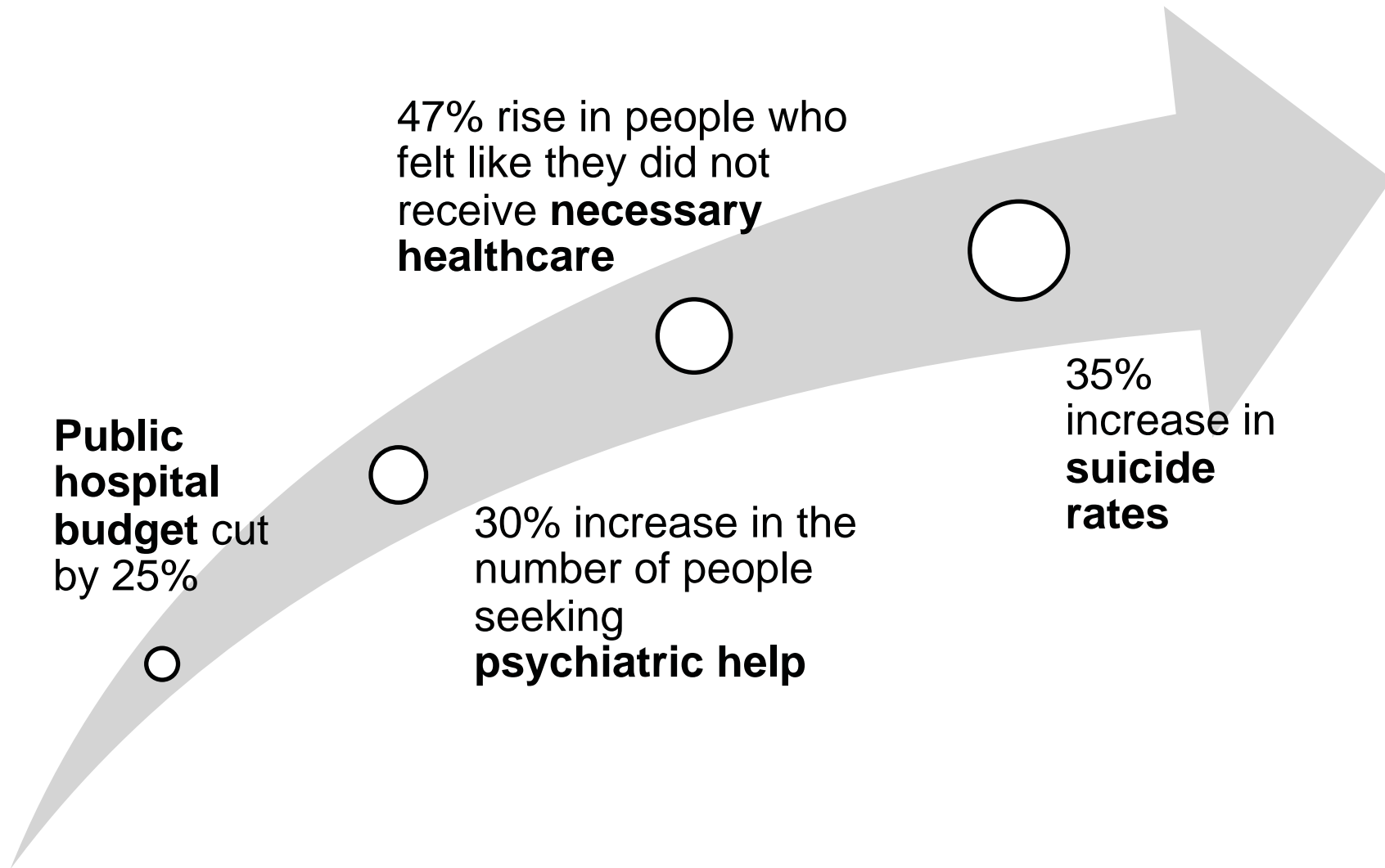
## Massed Unemployment



### Greeks Are Fleeing Greece

The people leaving Greece are some of the most economically productive which makes it that much harder for the Greek economy to recover.





Source: Time 2011, *The Greek Mental-Health Crisis: As Economy Implodes, Depression and Suicide Rates Soar*, viewed 21/9/2015, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2079813,00.html>

G. Rachiotis 2015, *What happened to suicides during the Greek economic crisis?*, viewed 21/9/2015, <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/5/3/e007295.full>

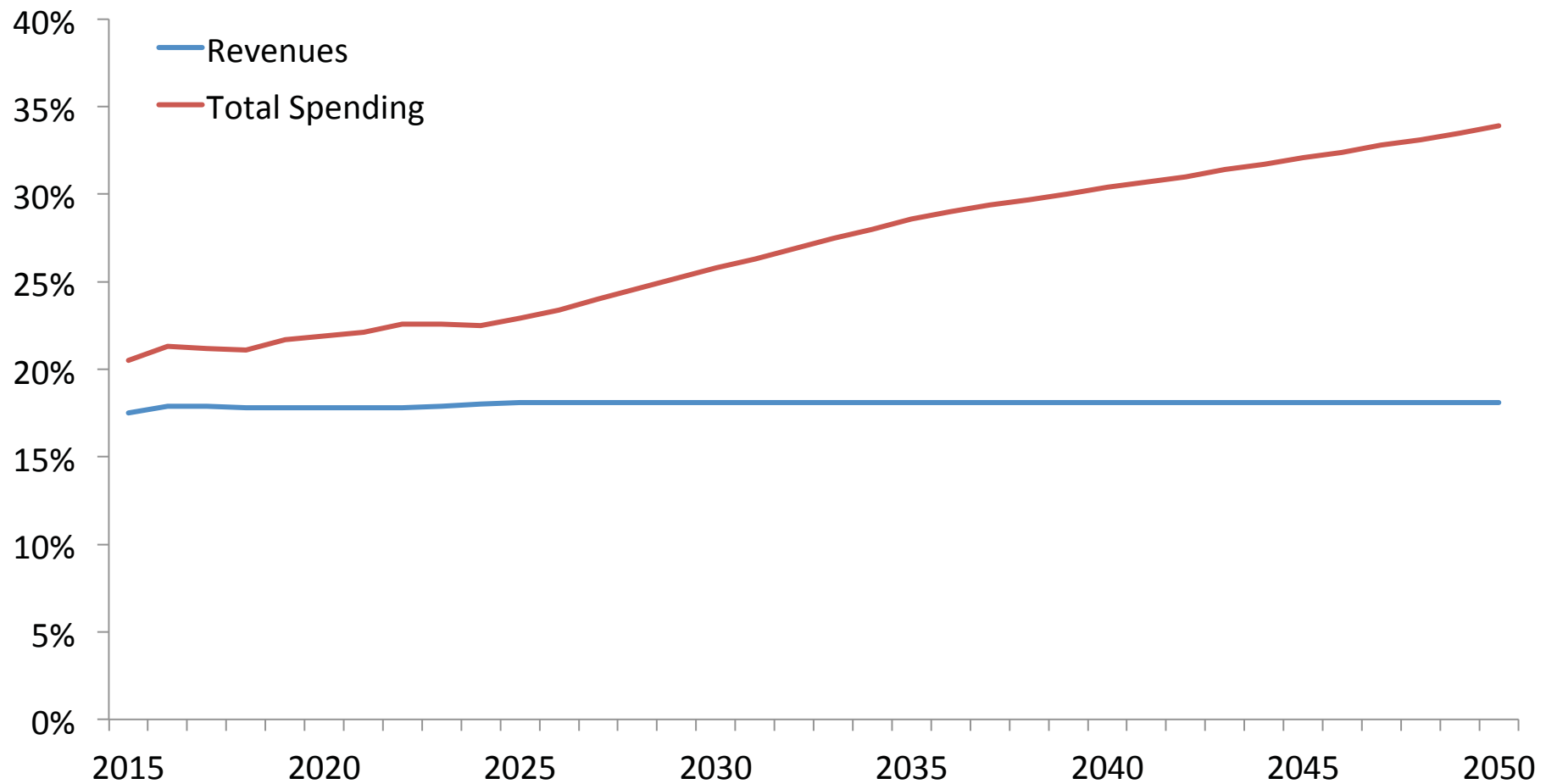
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2014, *Greece – a depending health crisis*, viewed 21/9/2015,



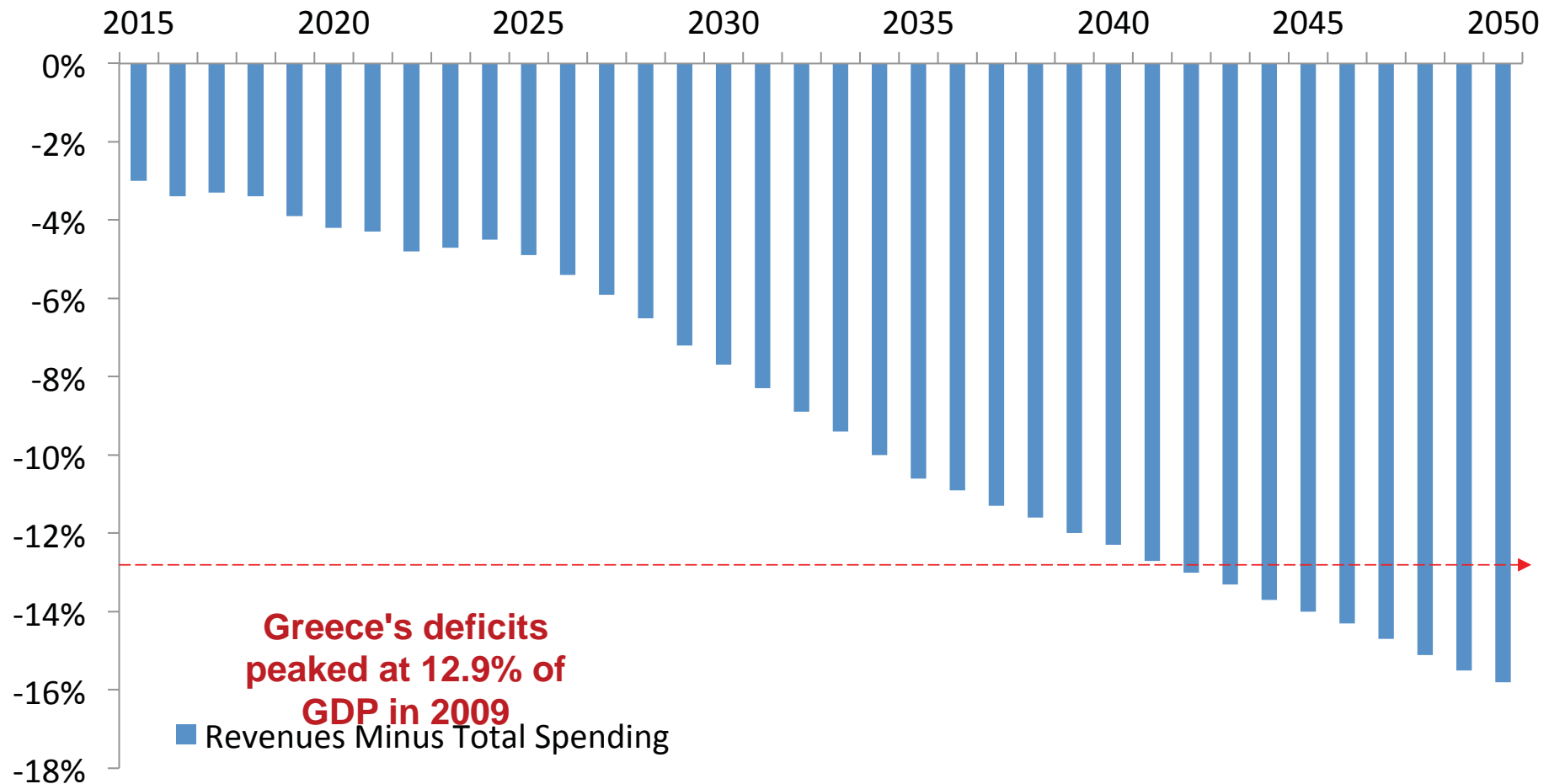
- More than 3 million (27.7% of population) people on the edge of poverty
- 20,000 people are homeless in Greece
  - 9,000 are homeless in Athens

## Budget Deficit

% of GDP



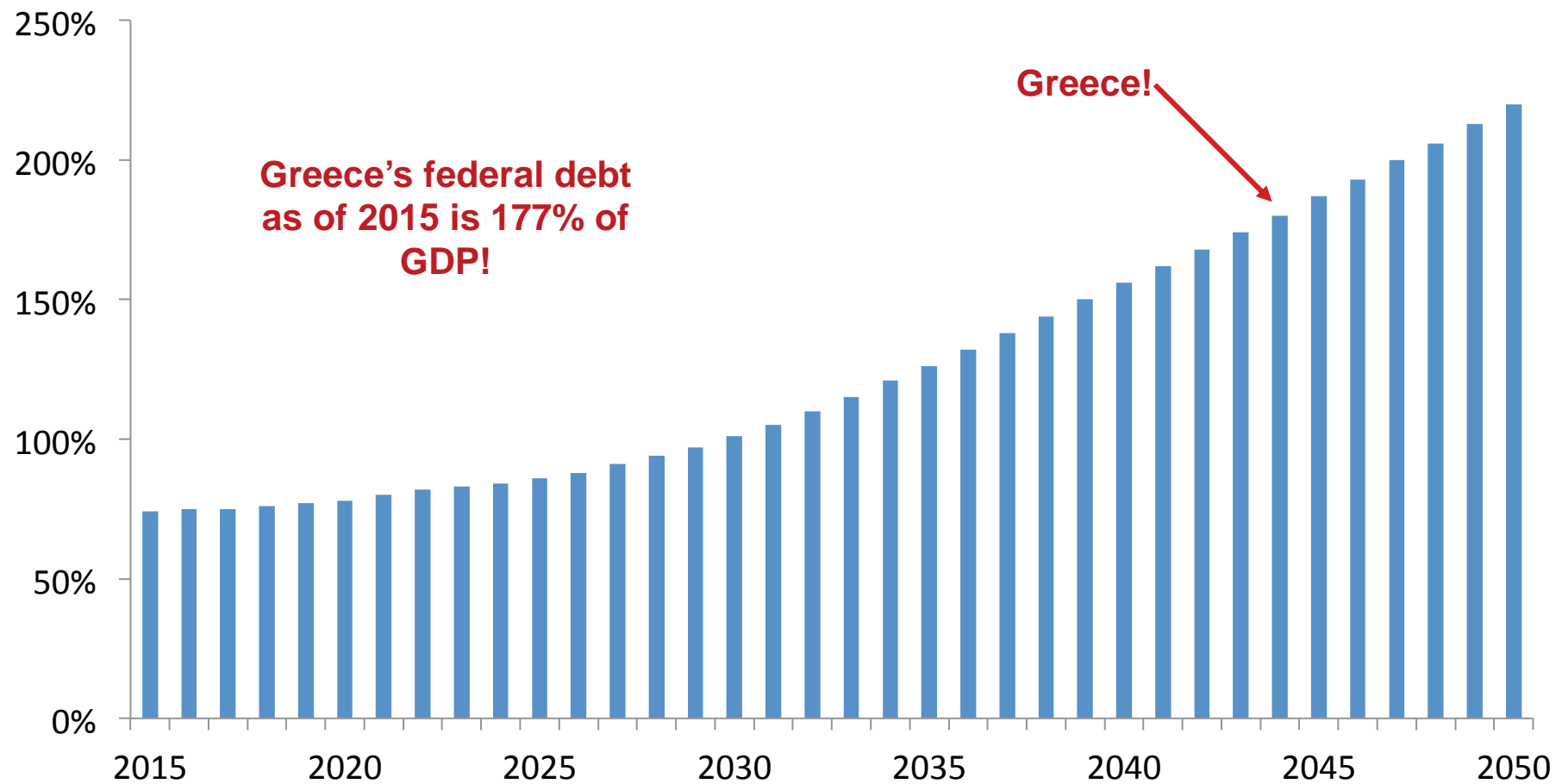
## Cumulative Impact



% of GDP



% of GDP

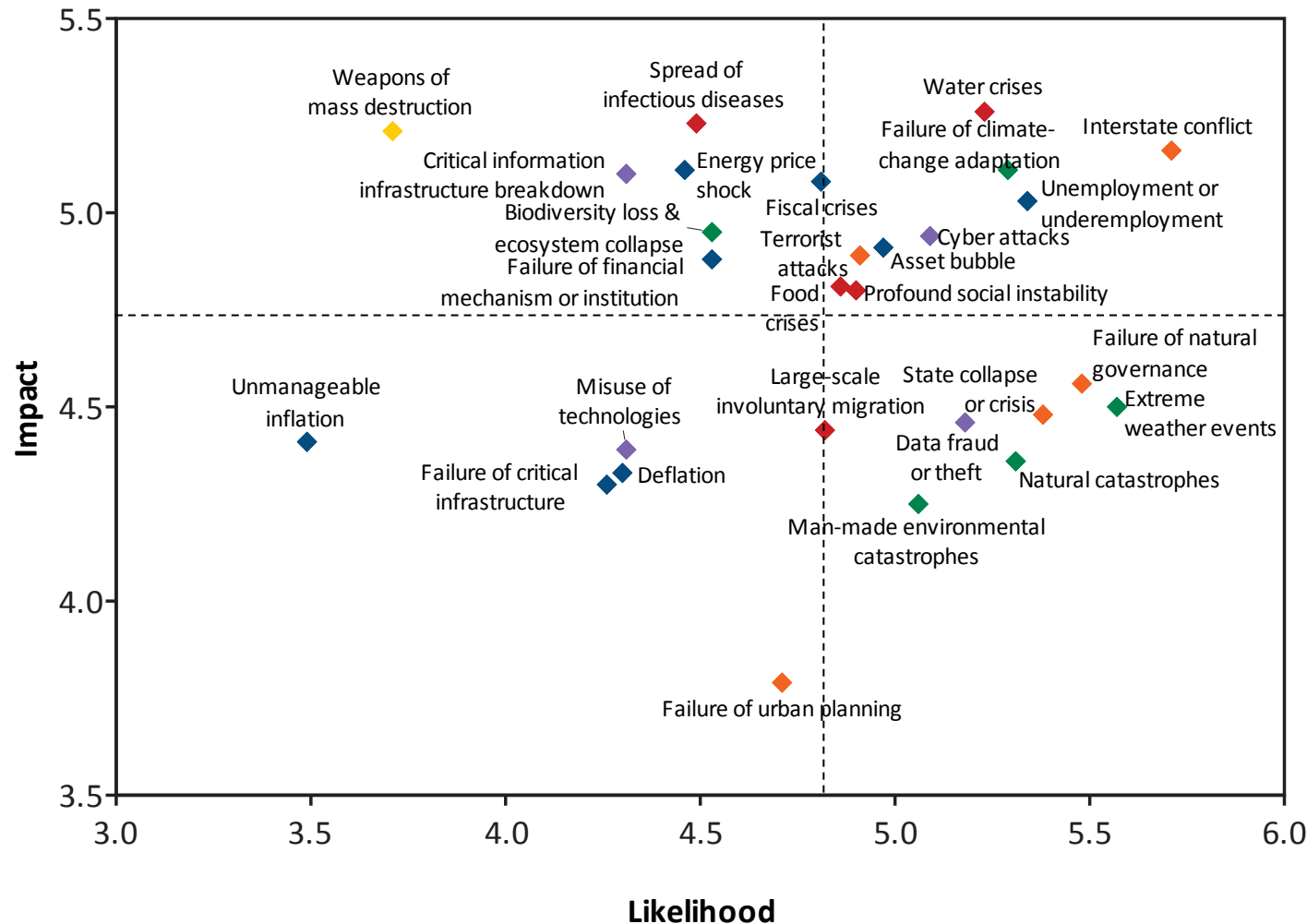




# Impending Challenges

World Economic Forum

## Risk Categories



- 1. Heritage**      **The roots of the Western tree**  
The Judeo-Christian ethic gave birth to the free & prosperous West yet is now being abandoned
- 2. Disaster!**      **Challenges facing society today**  
A survey, with particular attention to economic weaknesses
- 3. Response**      **Christians being Christians**

# Implications For Christians & Churches

## A Challenging Context

- Business as usual
- Address the challenges of the world as you teach from the Scriptures
- Be ready
  - Faith under fire
  - People needing help
- Business as usual

# Impending Challenges

