

# Social Stratification

- What is social stratification?
  - Systematic inequality between groups of people
- Why social?
  - SS concerns the groups of people
  - Systems of inequality are organized around groups with a shared characteristic.
- Criteria delimit the inequality
  - wealth, income, prestige, power, gender, education, age
- Rankings of groups change only very slowly
- Contemporary European societies are stratified societies

# On what dimensions does stratification exist?

- Assets, wealth, money (“class” views) = Labour market
- Prestige, respect (“status” views)
- Education, occupation, income (“socioeconomic status” view)
- Power and influence (“power” view)
  
- The debate is over which is the most important or most basic
- Three main dimensions of stratification are: **power, economic capital, prestige**
  
- Basic *Social Stratification Cube: 3 dimensions*

# Two concepts of social stratification

- *Inequality of conditions*
  - unequal distribution of income to people
  - differences in wealth and material conditions
  - different incomes means different chances to get different goods
- *Inequality of opportunity*
  - unequal start positions
  - different start positions means different chances to get different levels of education, jobs and incomes

# Inequality of conditions vs. inequality of opportunity

- *Inequality of conditions* and *inequality of opportunity* are connected in empirical reality
- Analytically they are two concepts that describe differences among people
- *Inequality of conditions* result from social classes in empirical reality
- *Inequality of opportunity* result from social movements/social mobility

# Inequality of material conditions

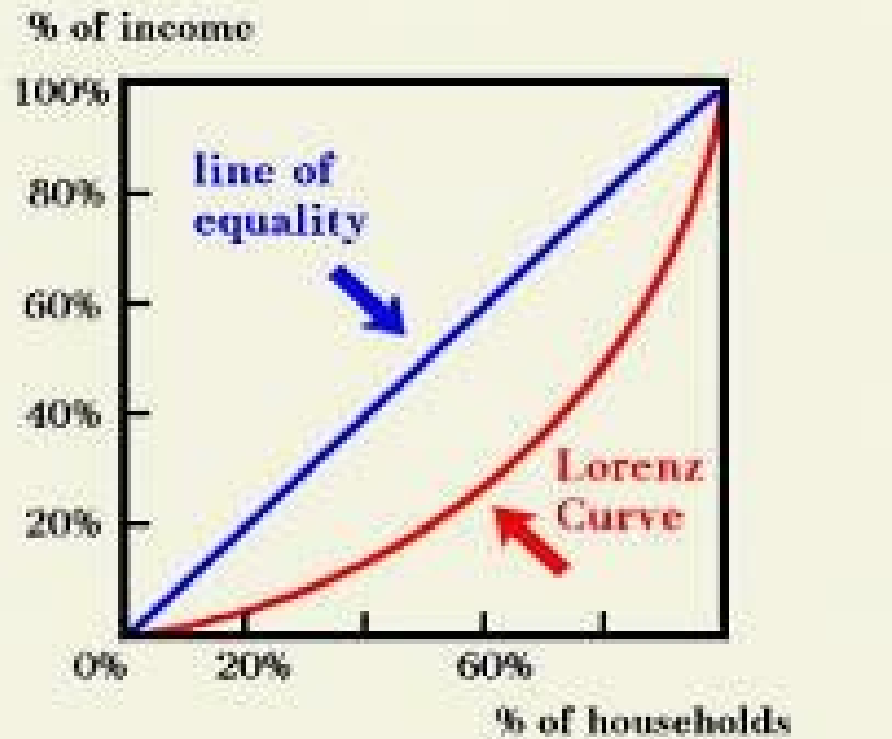
- indicated by **Lorenz curve** in empirical reality
  - curve not number, it shows the shape of material inequality not the size
- the size of material inequality is indicated by **GINI coefficient**
  - it is number, it shows the size of material inequality

# Lorenz curve I.

- Max O. Lorenz (1876-1959), American economist
- description of concentration of incomes/wealth in societies
- graphical presentation of inequality of conditions
  - it is cumulative distribution function
- Lorenz curve is utilized in social sciences as:
  - economy
  - sociology
  - demography
  - statistics

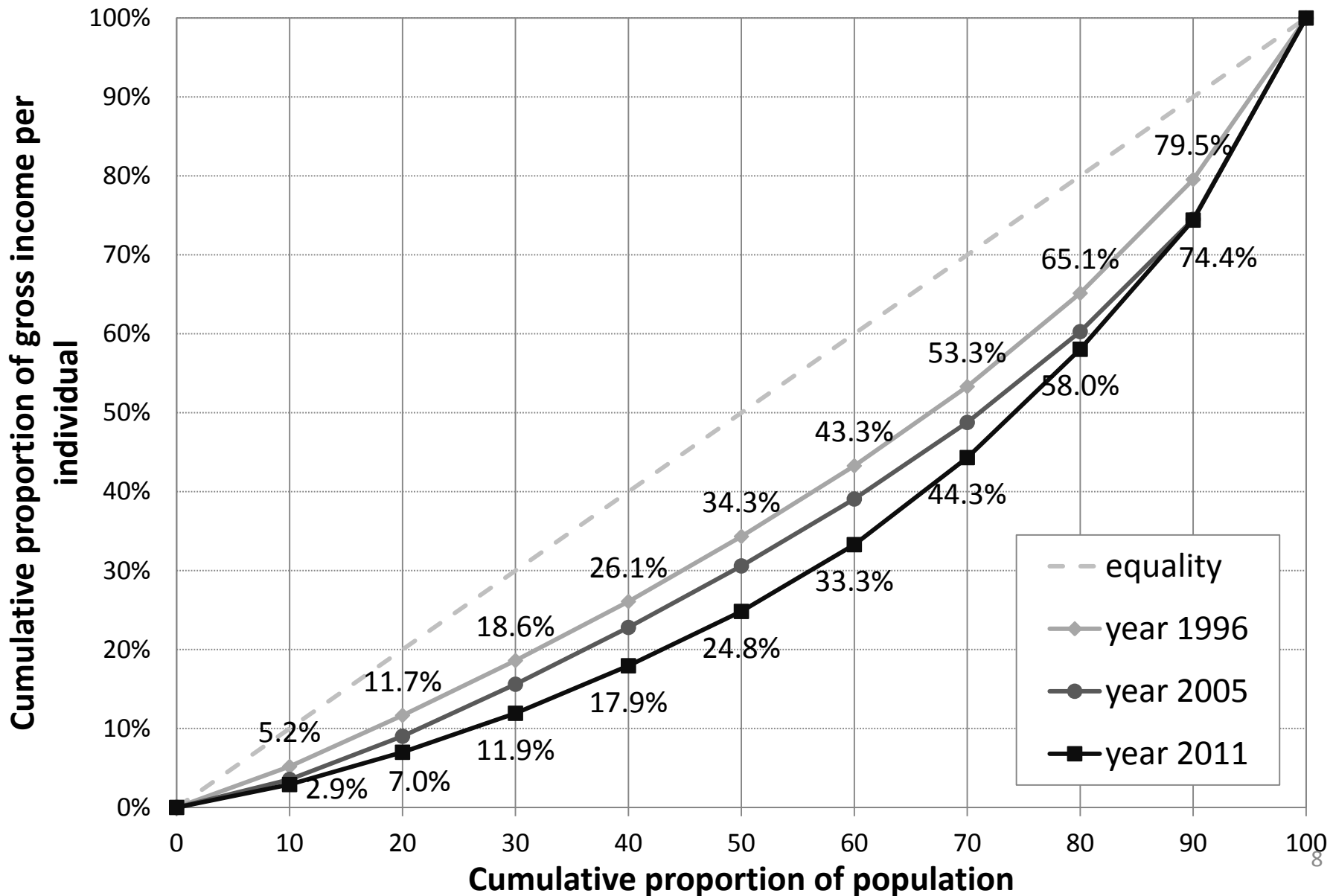
# Lorenz curve II.

- it is based on the comparison of cumulative distribution of incomes to cumulative distribution of population
- higher distance between hypothetical and real Lorenz curve means higher inequality in incomes in society



A Lorenz Curve illustrates inequality

# Trends in Lorenz curve in the CR



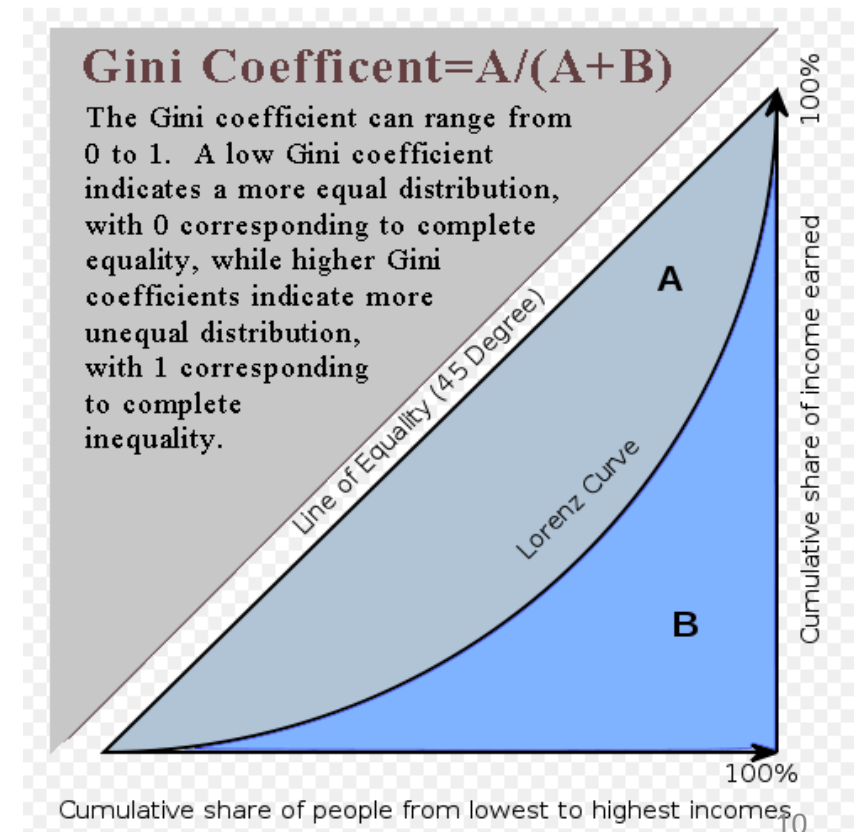
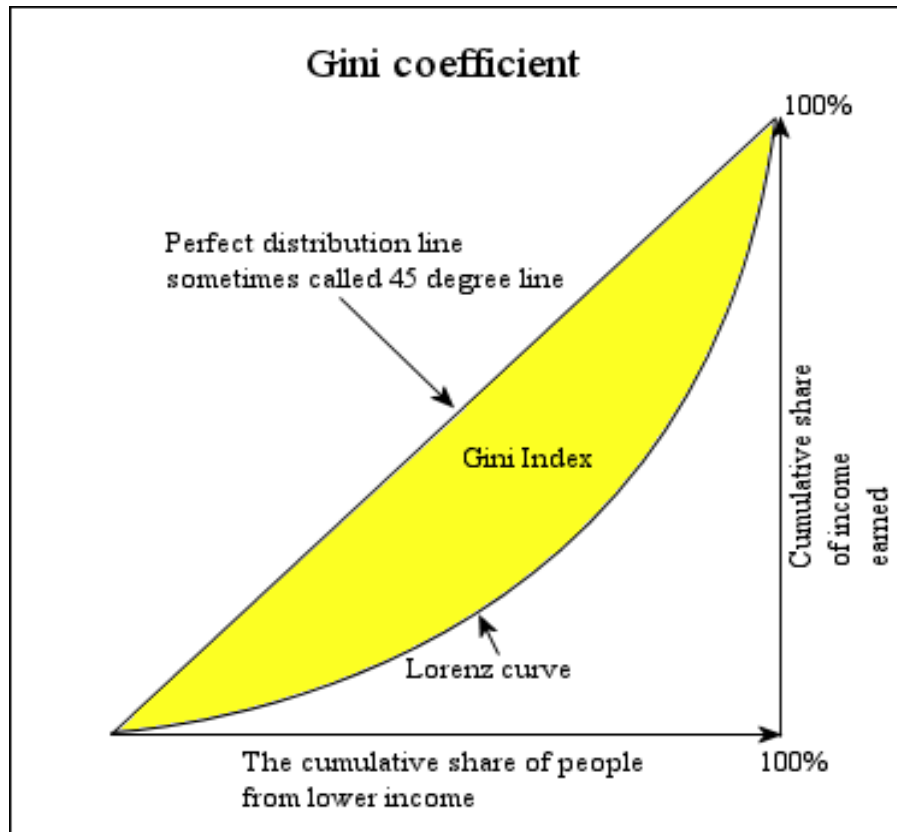


# Gini index I.

- Corrado Gini (1884-1965), Italian sociologist, statistician and demograph
- the Gini coefficient is also known as the Gini index or Gini ratio
- a measure of the income inequality
- it is one number that represents the income distribution in society
- the coefficient varies between 0, which reflects complete equality and 1, which indicates complete inequality (one person has all the income or consumption, all others have none).

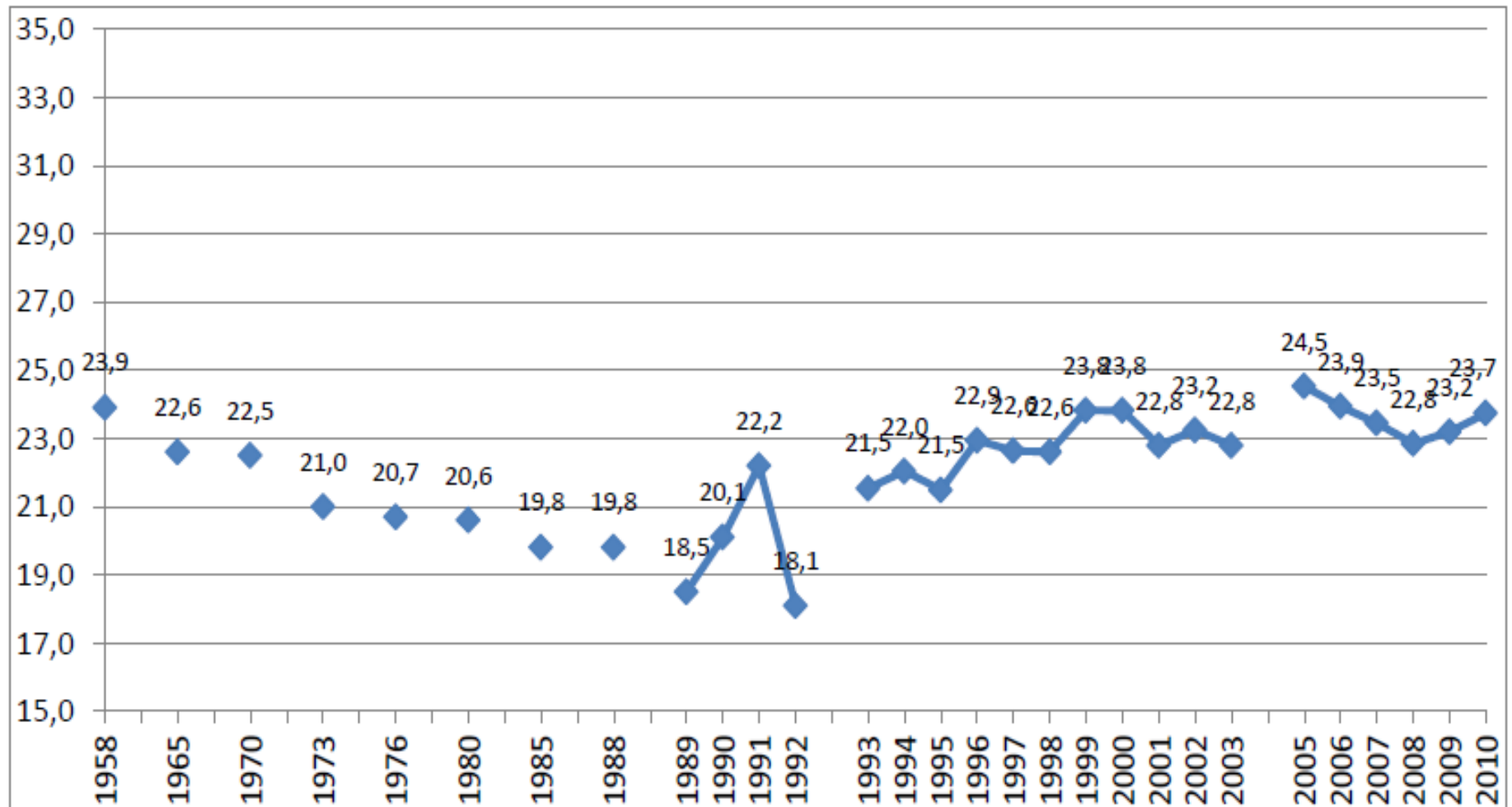
# Gini index II.

- GI is derived from Lorenz curve
  - it shows the relationship between the Lorenz curve area and the total area under ideal Lorenz curve area



# Trend in GINI in the Czech Republic

Figure 2.2 Gini coefficient, Czech Republic



Notes: Gini coefficient in the Czech Republic. Income sharing unit is household, units of analysis is household (after 1993) or person (up to 1992), income defined as disposable income (monetary disposable income before 1989). Data for 1965-1985 valid for Czechoslovakia. Household income equivalized since 2005.

# Advantages and disadvantages of Lorenz curve and GINI coefficient

- **advantages of GINI**
  - it is a number suitable for comparison of many historical periods or countries
- **disadvantages of GINI**
  - it does not show the shape of inequality, different shapes but one GINI coefficient
- **advantages of Lorenz curve**
  - it shows the shape of inequality, it means that it makes differences among various types of inequalities
- **disadvantages of Lorenz curve**
  - but Lorenz curve is not very suitable for huge comparisons
  - many curves means chaos

## Justifying Inequality

**One justification for inequality is that wide differences in pay are needed to recruit talented people into important jobs, such as specialized surgeons, and to motivate lengthy training.**

*But how large should these differences be to achieve motivation?*

Is inequality ever beneficial to a society?  
Why? Why not?

# Inequality of opportunity

- indicated by social mobility
  - SM is the movement of people up or down the stratification system
- trends in European countries
  - from agriculture to industry: industrial societies
  - from industry to services: post-industrial societies
    - these trends are reflected in structural social mobility trends
- but no changes in social fluidity (relative social mobility)
  - odds ratios are the same

# Ascription versus Achievement

- What is *ascription*?
  - How does ascriptive society work?
- What is *achievement*?
  - How does meritocratic society work?
- Why we should strive for *meritocratic societies*?
  - Discussion

# Three basic models of social stratification

- Slavery—ownership of certain people
- Caste—status for life
- Class—positions based on economics



# Fathers of social classes are Karl Marx and Max Weber

- **Karl Marx (1818–1883)**, German philosopher, economist, sociologist.
- Two classes in modern society: class antagonisms under capitalism between the bourgeoisie and proletariat
- Classes are defined by the relationship to production
  - Bourgeoisie owns means of production
  - Proletariat owns just labour power
- This is the problem of modern society
  
- **Max Weber (1864–1920)**, German sociologist, philosopher, and political economist
- Class position means the labour market position
- Jobs
- Many classes and specific behaviour (explanation!)

# Standards of Equality – what should be the goal?

- **Ontological equality** - everyone is created equal. Goal is equal respect and status within the culture.
- **Equality of Condition** – “level playing field,” same starting point for everyone. Goals may include increasing diversity & using affirmative action.
- **Equality of Opportunity** - inequality of condition is acceptable as long as everyone has the same opportunities for advancement and is judged by the same standards
  - Fits most closely with modern capitalist society