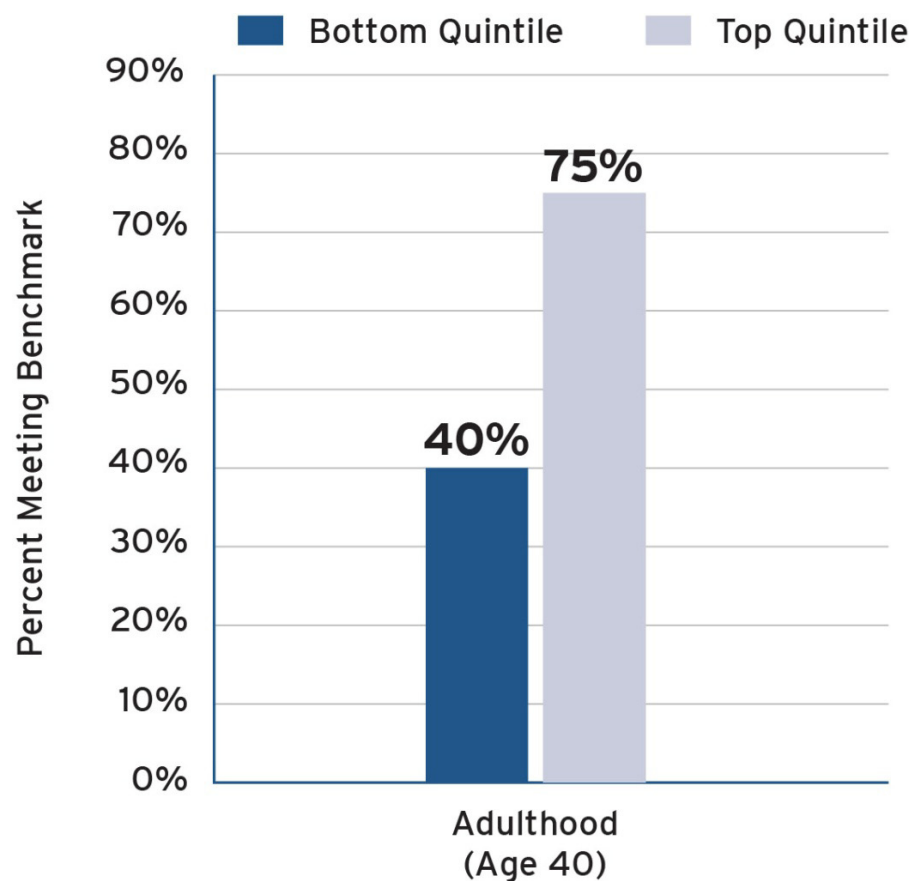


Pathways to the Middle Class: Balancing Personal and Public Responsibilities

Isabel V. Sawhill

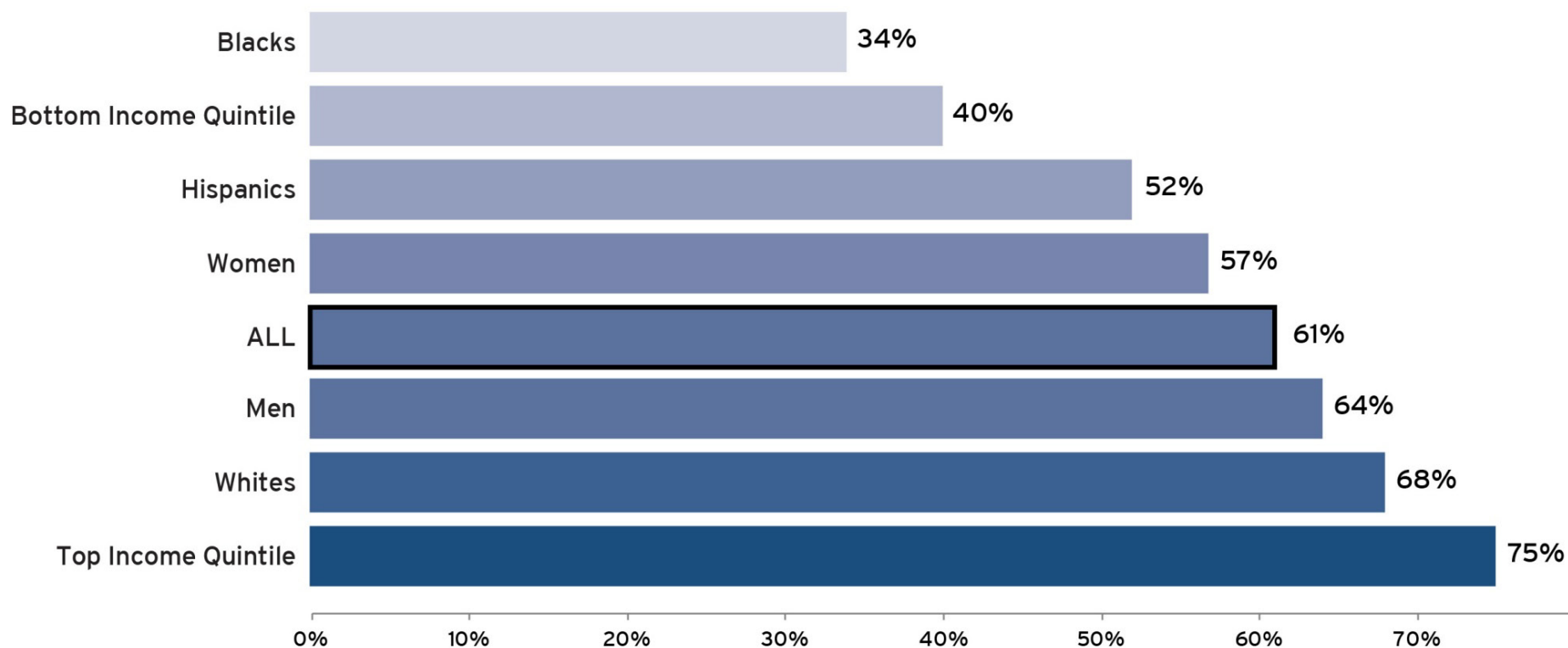
September 20, 2012

Children from top quintile much more likely to be middle class by middle age than children from bottom quintile



We define middle class by middle age as being at 300 percent of the poverty line by age 40. A middle class income for a family of 4 was about \$68,000 in 2011.

Chances of Reaching the Middle Class by Middle Age Vary



Benchmarks for Success



Early childhood

Acceptable
pre-reading and
math skills
AND
Behavior generally
school-appropriate



Middle childhood

Basic reading and
math skills
AND
Social-emotional
skills



Adolescence

Graduates from high
school w/GPA ≥ 2.5
AND
Has not been
convicted of a crime
nor become a parent



Transition to adulthood

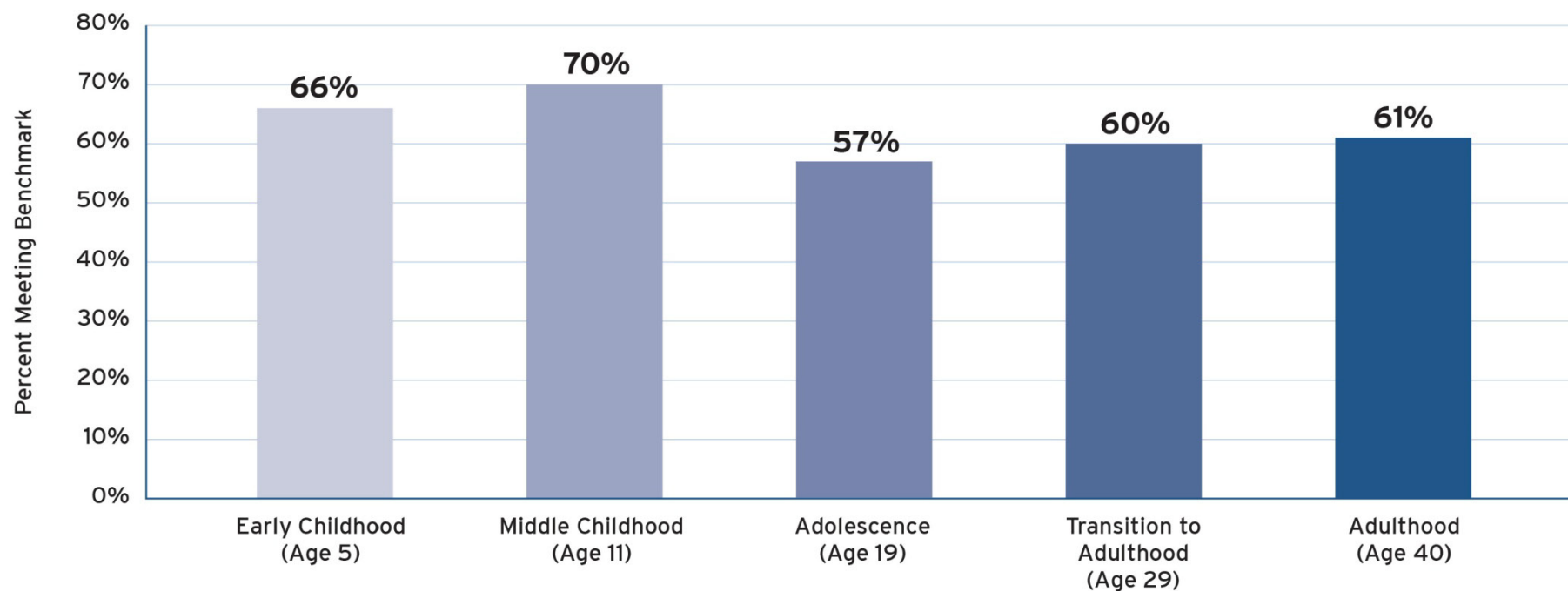
Lives independently
AND
Receives a
college degree or has
a family income
 $\geq 250\%$ of the
poverty level



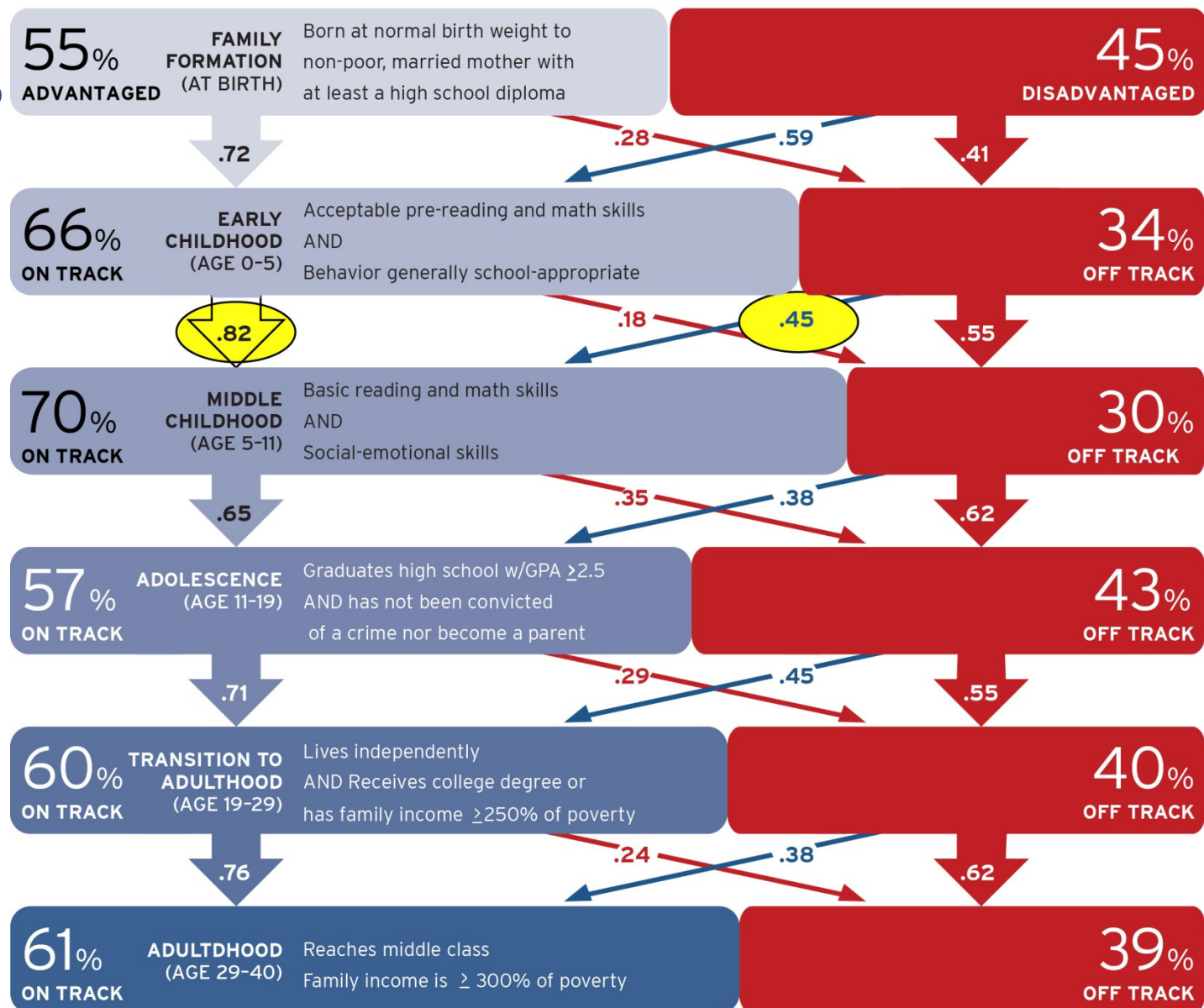
Adulthood

Reaches middle class
(family income at
least 300% of the
poverty level)

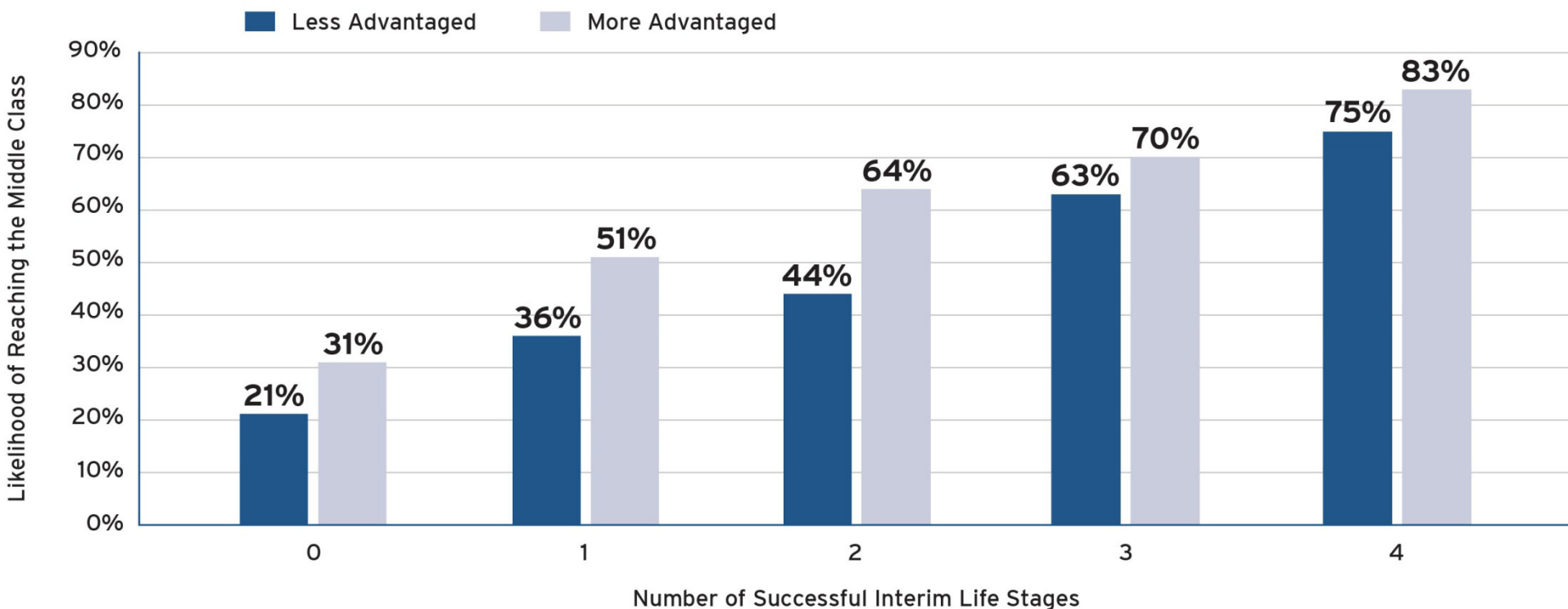
Percent of Children Succeeding at Each Life Stage



Pathways to the Middle Class



Likelihood of Reaching Middle Class by Number of Successful Life Stages



Recommendations

- Need BOTH better policy and better individual responsibility
- Funding should be tied to evidence of effectiveness
- Better education from pre-K to 12
- More access to college or technical training
- Stronger starts for more children