

Ethical Consumer Week 2023

What would more ambitious climate targets for the UK look like?

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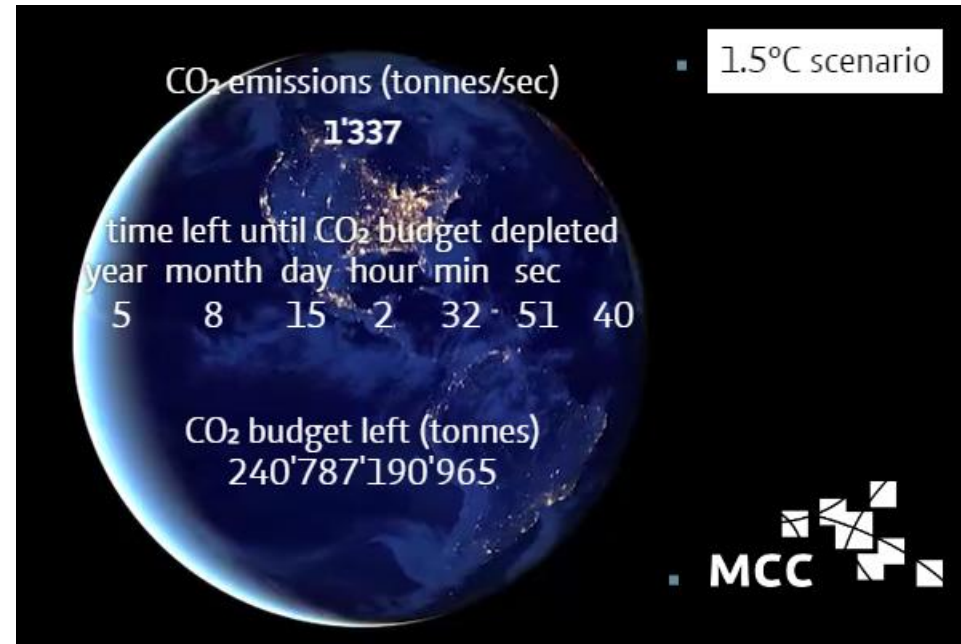
Outline



- What is a 'fair' carbon budget?
 - Remaining carbon budget
 - Different ways of measuring carbon emissions
- Inequalities in carbon footprints
- Doughnut Economics and Sufficiency Lifestyles

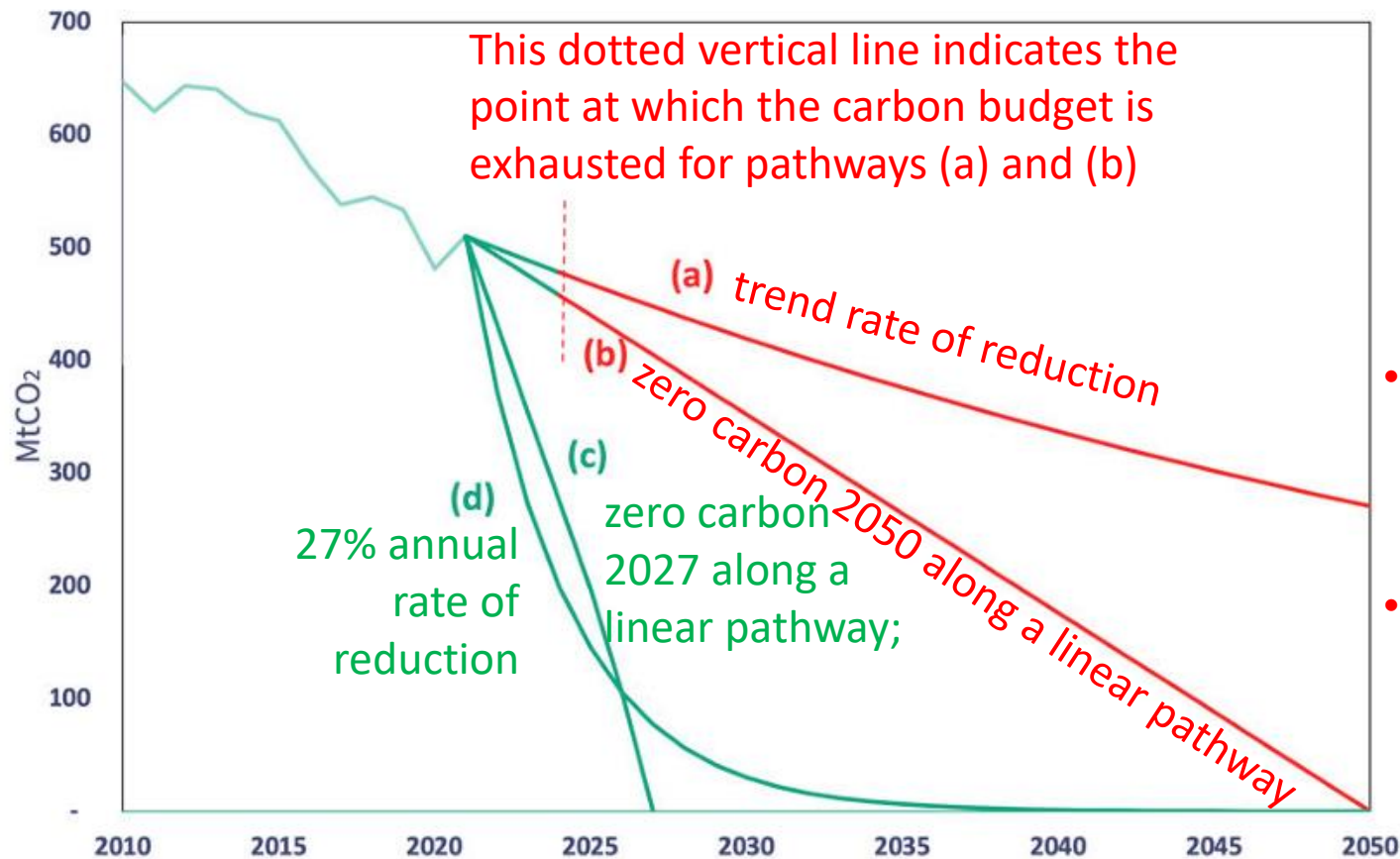
Carbon budgets and meaningful targets

- Climate Change Commission has set a national target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050;
- How meaningful and fair is this target?
- “Remaining carbon budget”
 - The maximum amount of carbon emissions that can be emitted to stabilise warming at 1.5C.
- How should it be divided up?
 - Pro rata basis gives UK 2.8Gt CO₂
 - But is this fair? UK has historically used more and therefore has higher responsibility;
 - A commonly used “fair” remaining budget is ~2.4Gt CO₂
- How close is the UK to staying within our remaining carbon budget?



Mercator Research Institute

<https://www.mcc-berlin.net/en/research/co2-budget.html>

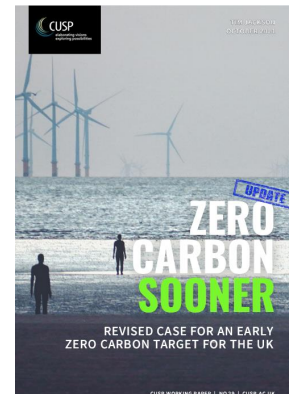


- “A target date for zero carbon is not sufficient in itself to determine whether the UK remains within its carbon budget.
- Policy must specify both a target date and an associated emissions pathway.”
- Current policies will exhaust the carbon budget well before 2030.

Historical emissions and future emission pathways

Consumption perspective

Jackson T 2021. Zero Carbon Sooner—Revised case for an early zero carbon target for the UK. CUSP Working Paper No 29. Guildford: Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity. www.cusp.ac.uk/publications



Emissions can be accounted for using two different perspectives

- which perspective is used matters

TV made in China, purchased in the UK, by a UK consumer:

- Which nation should take responsibility for the emissions?**





a) Why China should take responsibility

- Production happens under China's regulations
 - electricity mix
 - technology used
- China has the ability to reduce the production emissions

b) Why the UK should take responsibility

- UK consumers drive the market
- Power to reduce emissions through consumption changes.

Both perspectives are valid.

Two ways of accounting for carbon emissions:

- Production accounting perspective: Carbon emissions attributed to China;
- Consumption accounting perspective: Carbon emissions attributed to UK consumption.

Production and consumption accounting

- **Production Perspective**

- Territorial emissions;
- Includes exports, excludes imports;
- National emissions inventory.
- Used by UNFCCC in international climate negotiations and UK Climate Change Committee

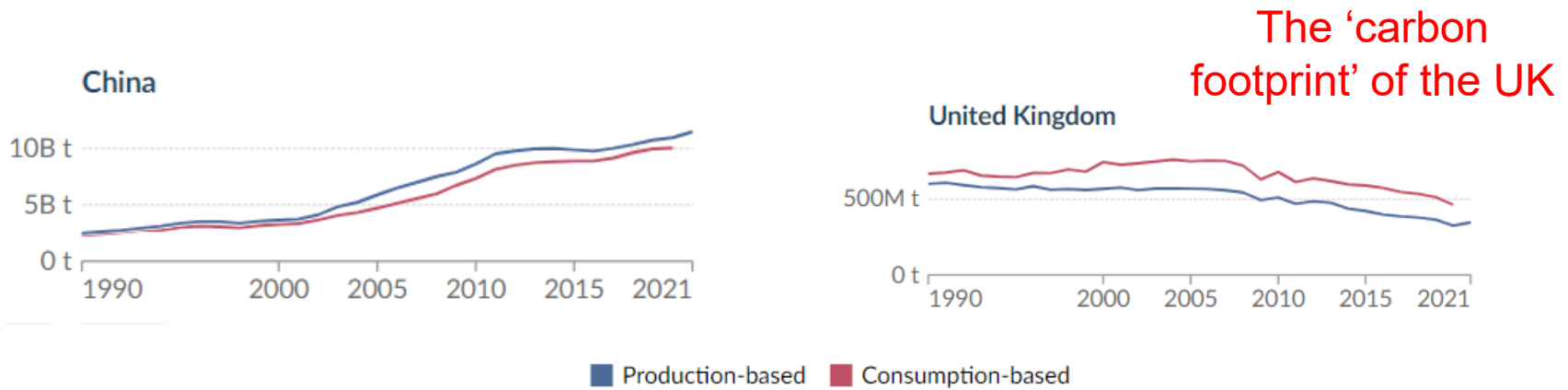
- **Consumption Perspective**

- Consumption-based emissions;
- Includes imports, excludes exports;
- Hard to estimate.



Difference is the carbon embodied in trade

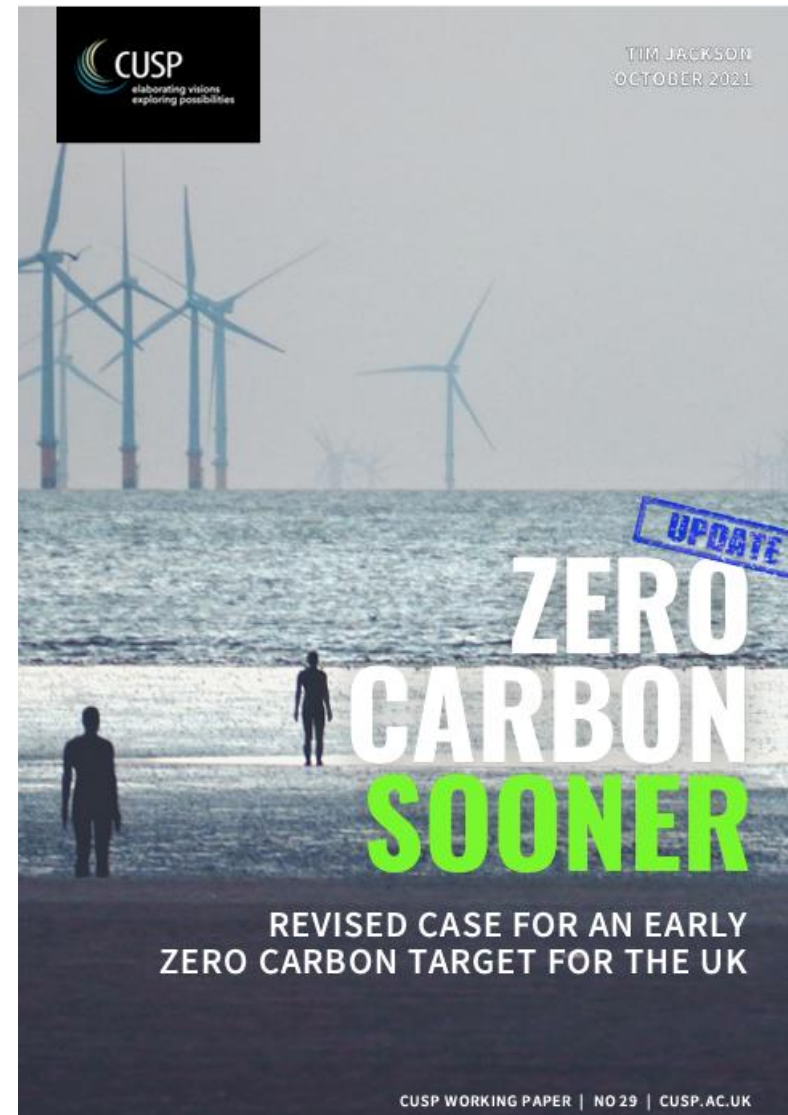
“Carbon leakage”



Consumption accounting is arguably the most ethical way of measuring emissions.

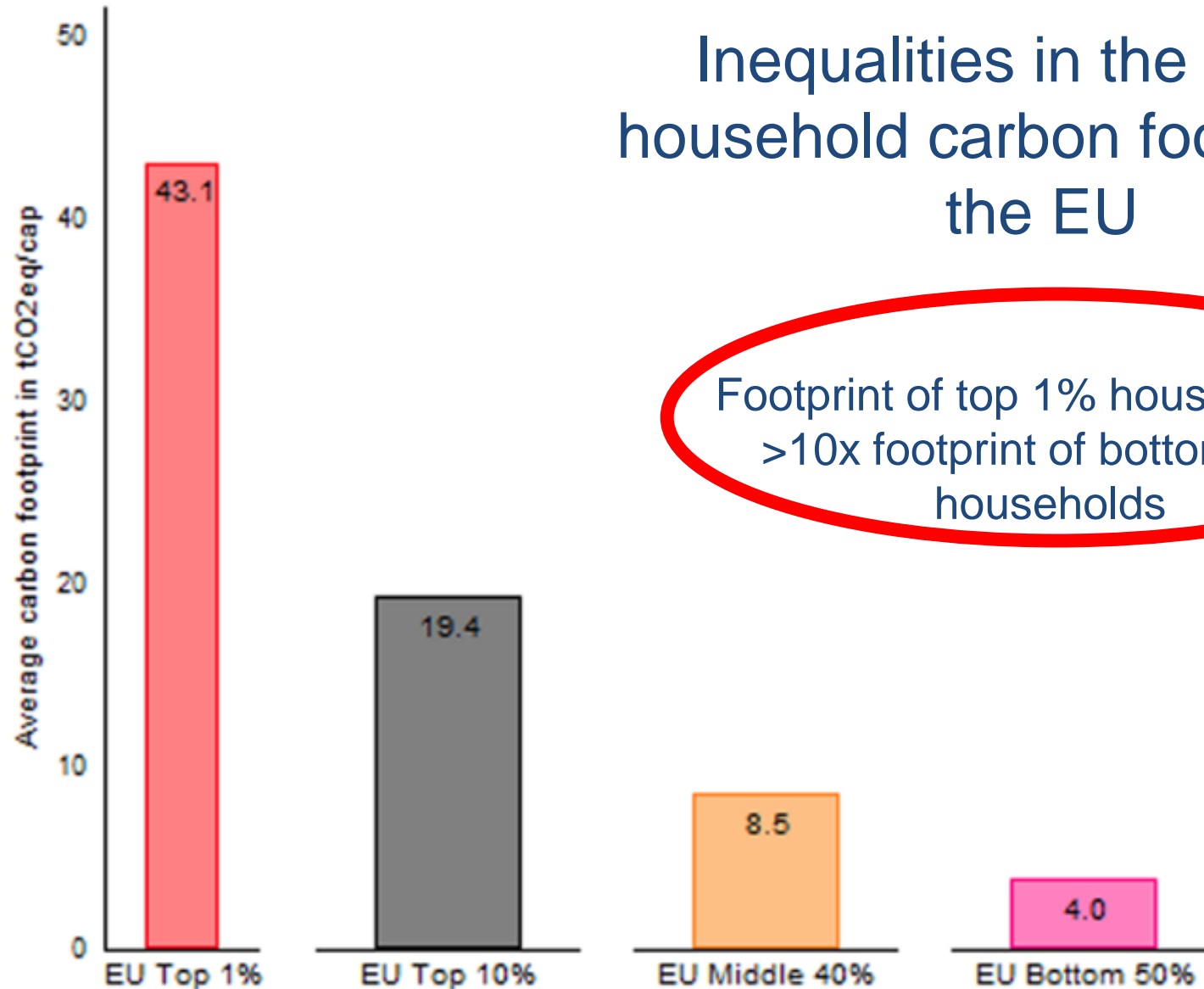
This implies a bigger task than when measuring according to the production perspective.

When calculated from the consumption perspective, absolute reductions approaching 95% of current carbon emissions as early as 2030 are required, for the UK to stay within its 'fair' remaining carbon budget.



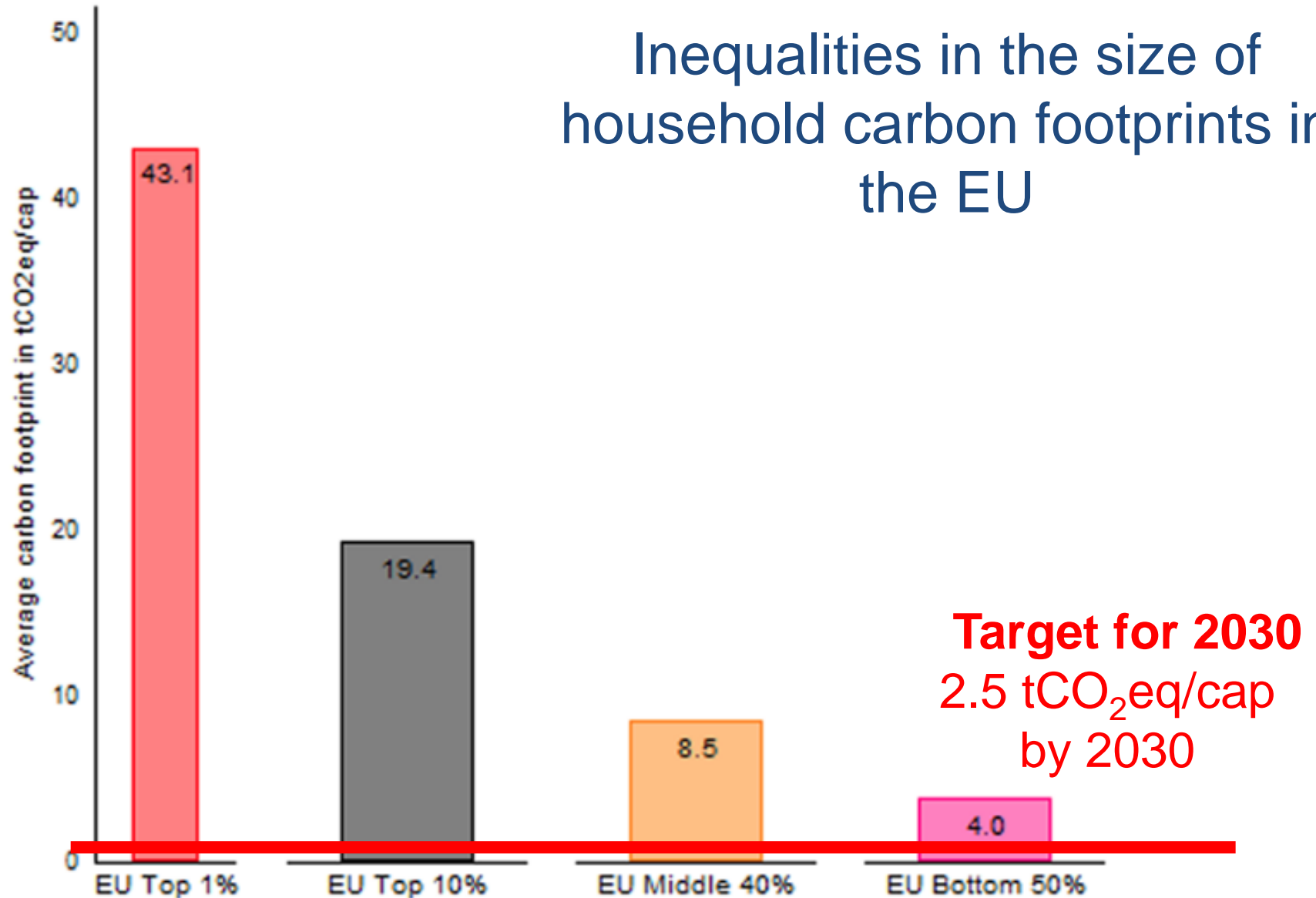
So far we have been talking about an averages.....

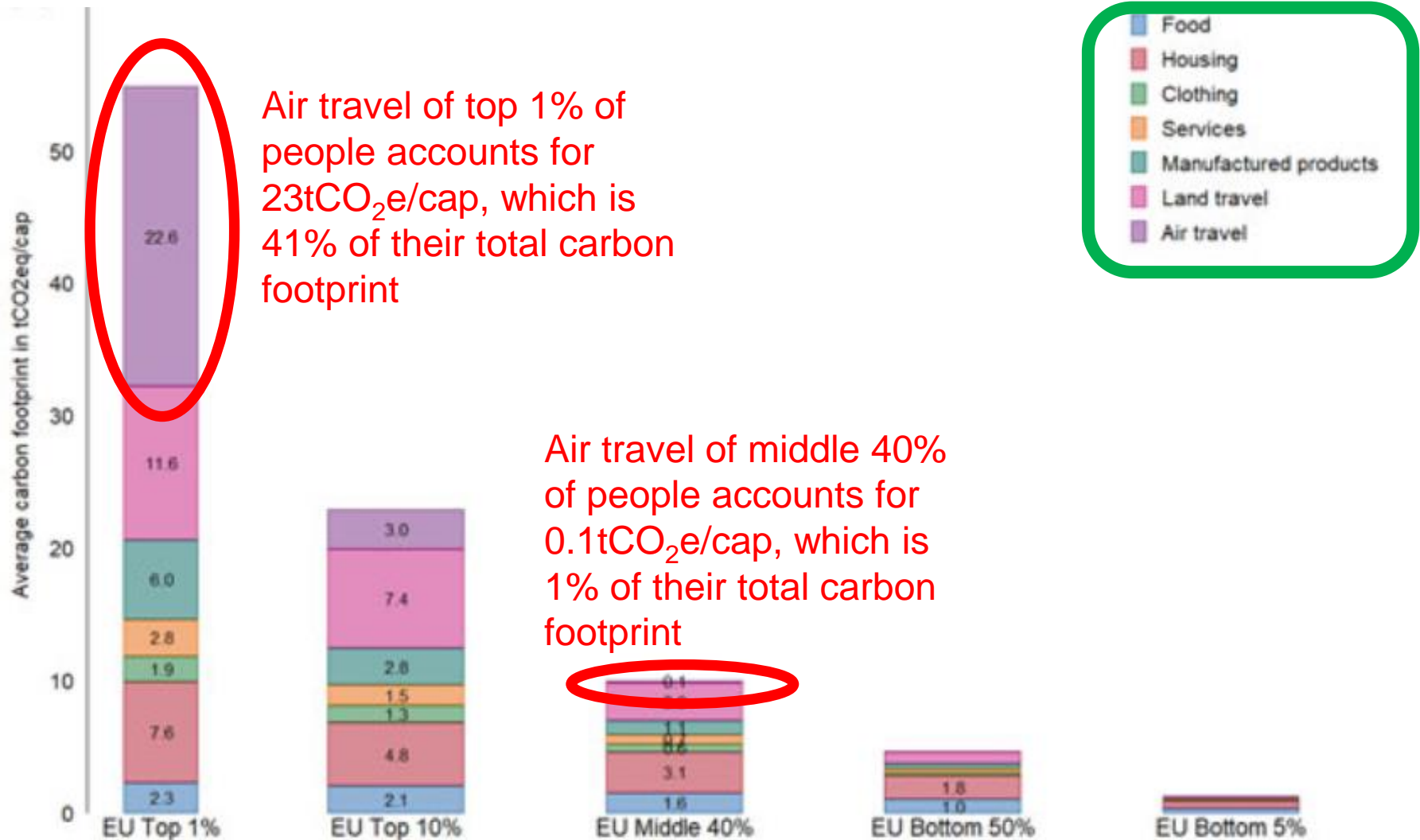
Inequalities in the size of household carbon footprints in the EU



Footprint of top 1% households is
>10x footprint of bottom 50%
households

Inequalities in the size of household carbon footprints in the EU

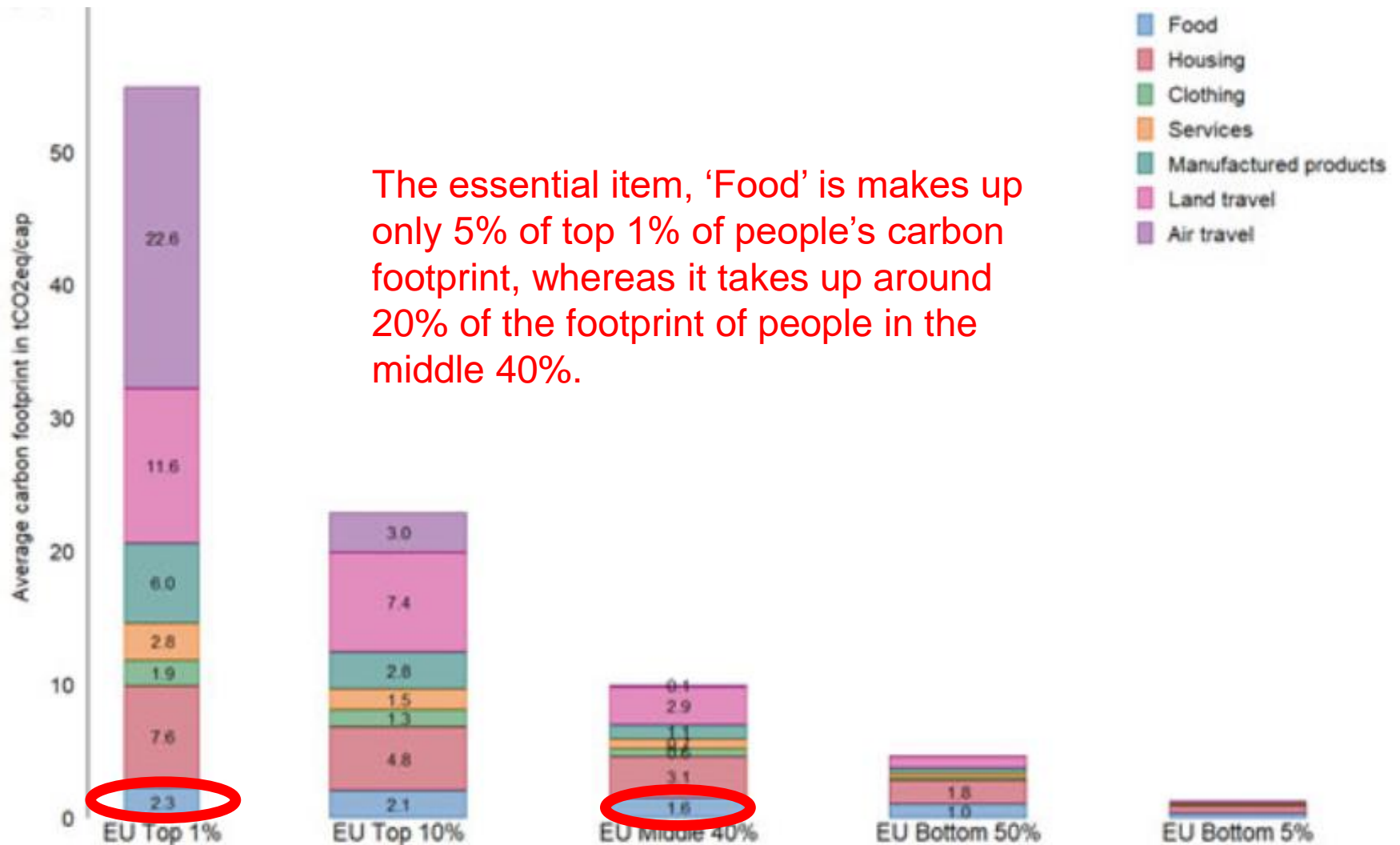




Average carbon footprint distribution by consumption category in the European Union

Source: Ivanova, D. and R. Wood (2020). "The unequal distribution of household carbon footprints in Europe and its link to sustainability." Global Sustainability **3**.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2020.12>

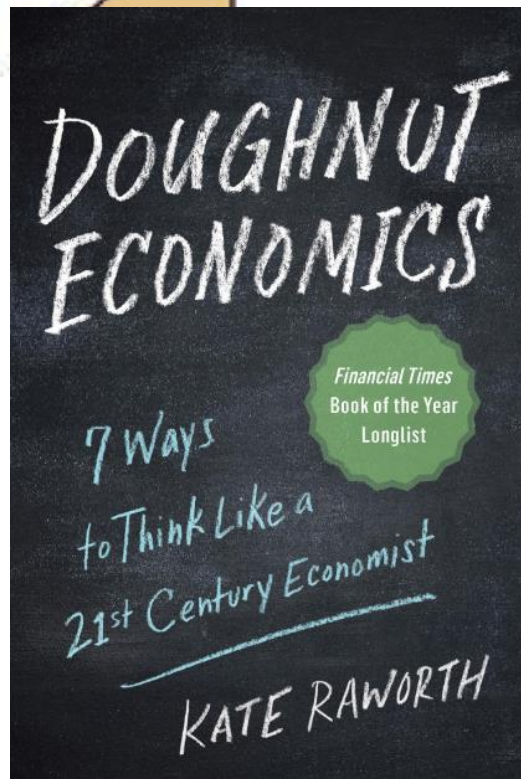


The essential item, 'Food' makes up only 5% of top 1% of people's carbon footprint, whereas it takes up around 20% of the footprint of people in the middle 40%.

Average carbon footprint distribution by consumption category in the European Union

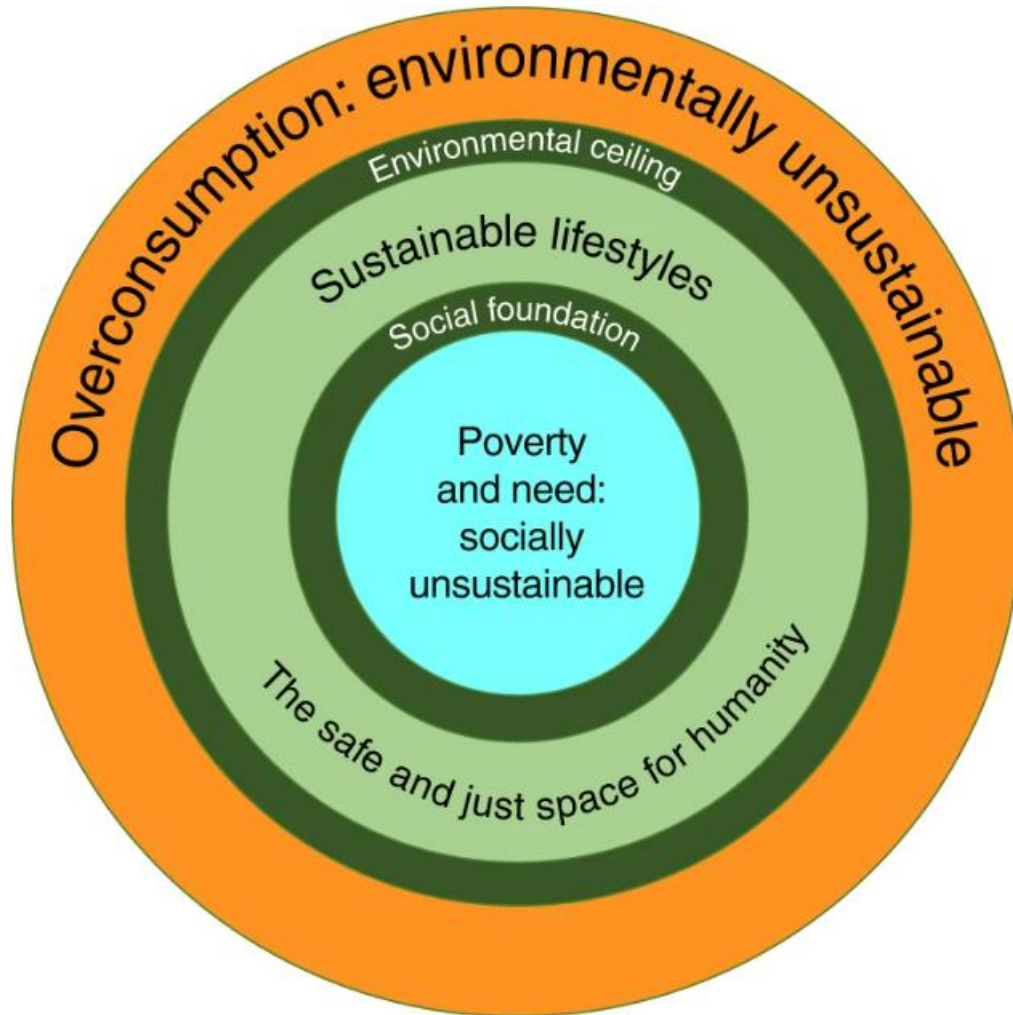
Source: Ivanova, D. and R. Wood (2020). "The unequal distribution of household carbon footprints in Europe and its link to sustainability." Global Sustainability **3**.

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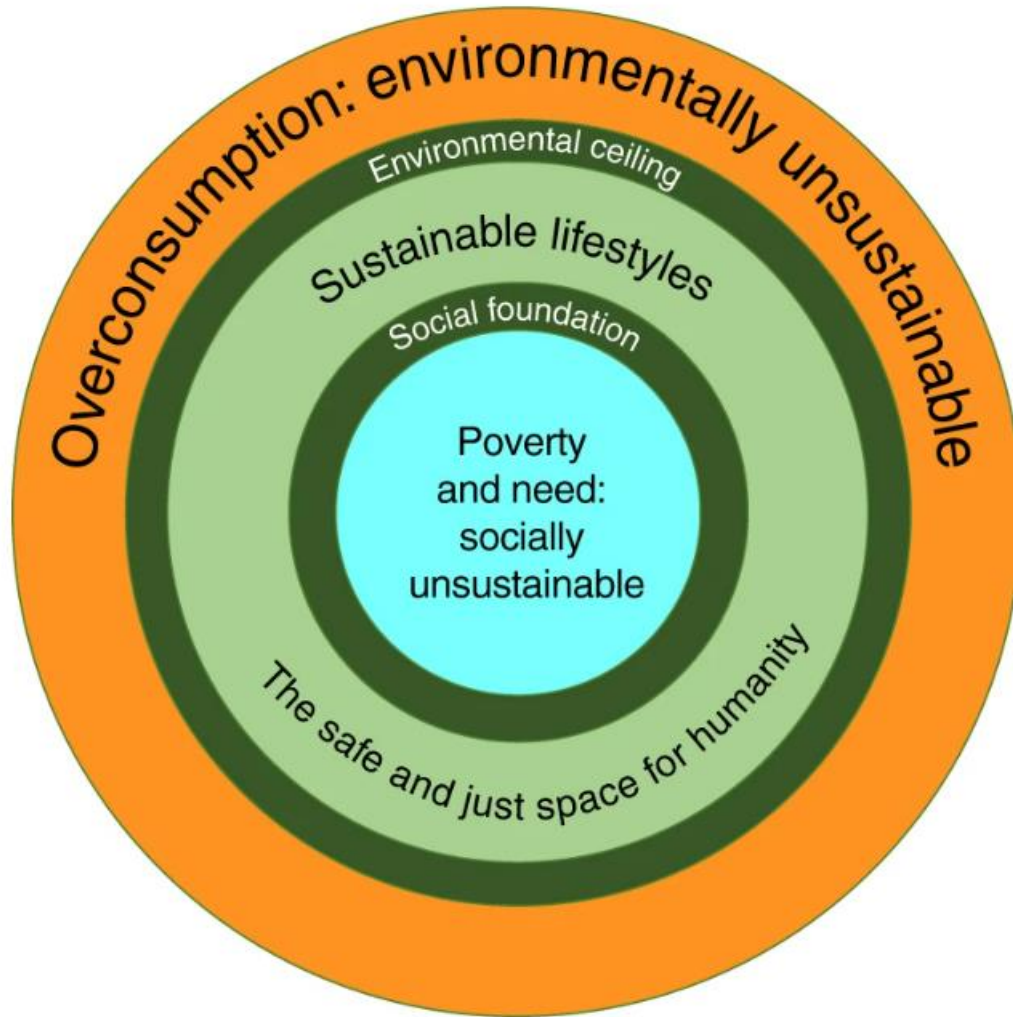
The safe and just space for humanity

Sustainable lifestyles



Sources: Wiedmann, T., M. Lenzen, L. T. Keyßer and J. K. Steinberger (2020). "Scientists' warning on affluence." Nature Communications 11(1): 3107. Raworth, K. (2012). "A safe and just space for humanity: can we live within the doughnut." Oxfam Policy and Practice: Climate Change and Resilience 8(1): 1-26.

The safe and just space for humanity



Sustainable lifestyles
are situated between an
**upper limit of permissible
use ("Environmental
ceiling")**
and
a lower limit of necessary
use of environmental
resources ("Social
foundation")

Sources: Wiedmann, T., M. Lenzen, L. T. Keyßer and J. K. Steinberger (2020). "Scientists' warning on affluence." Nature Communications 11(1): 3107. Raworth, K. (2012). "A safe and just space for humanity: can we live within the doughnut." Oxfam Policy and Practice: Climate Change and Resilience 8(1): 1-26.

Sufficiency Lifestyles

'A good life for all within planetary boundaries' (O'Neill et al (2018))

- Sufficient nutrition
- Sufficient access to energy
- Sufficient access to education
- Sufficient accessibility to work and leisure activities
- Sufficient living space per capita
-

Sufficiency Lifestyles

- Currently there is no country that achieves sufficiency.
- Although nations like the US and UK satisfy basic needs, their resource use is unsustainable.
- In contrast, countries such as Sri Lanka are within sustainable resource consumption per capita, but do not meet basic needs.

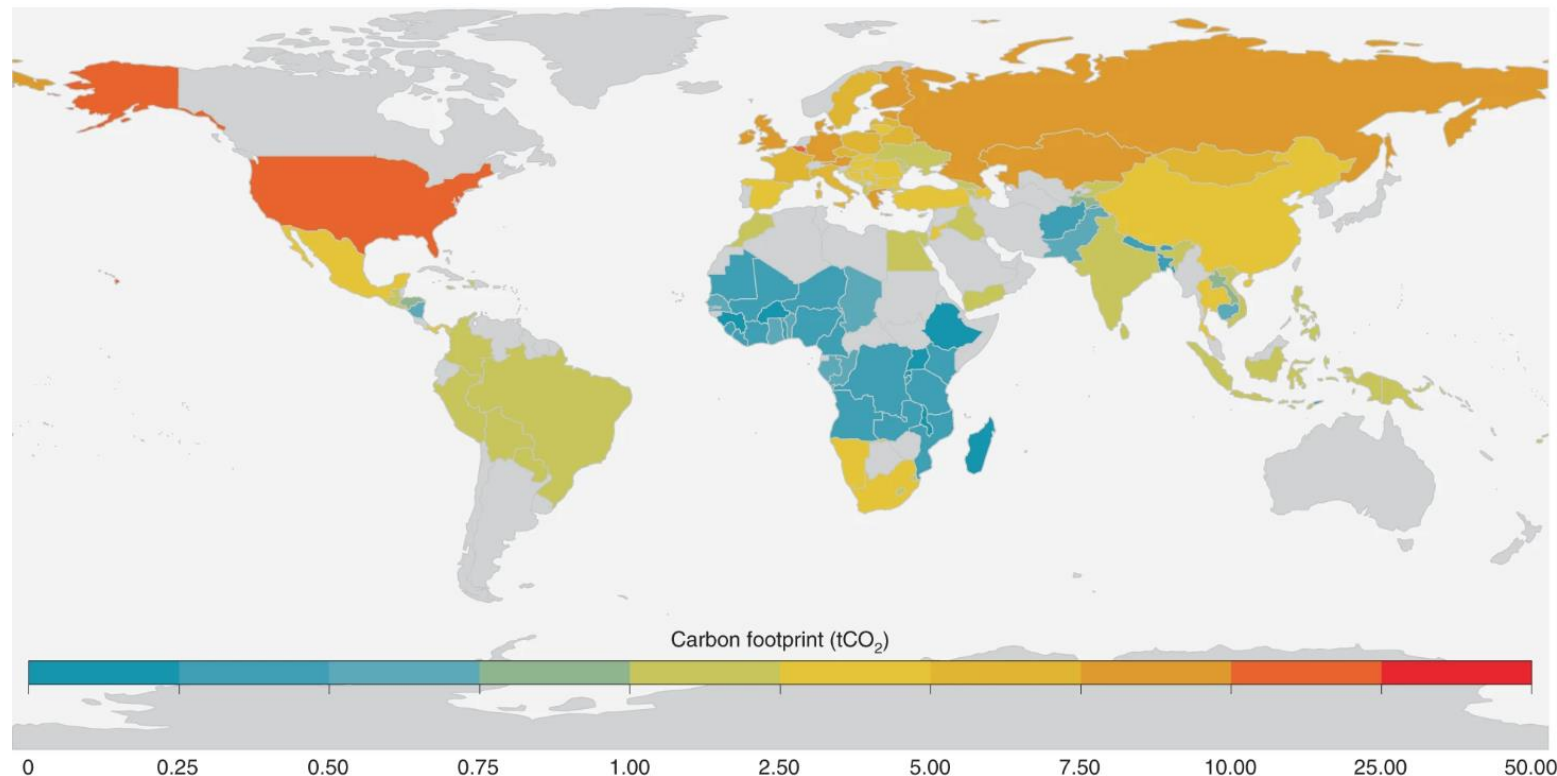




Lifting people out of poverty is not high carbon

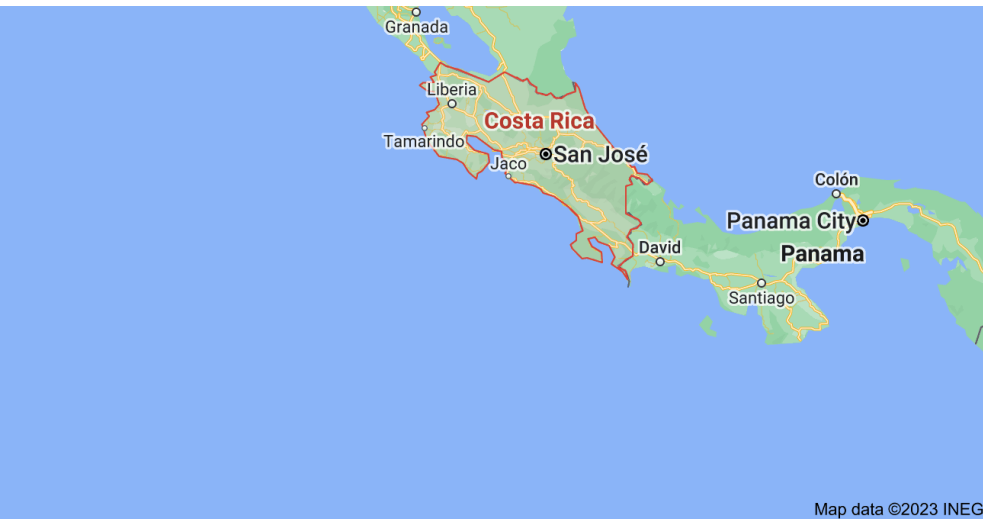
“...the majority of people living below poverty lines have yearly carbon footprints of less than 1 tCO₂

lifting more than one billion people out of poverty, leads to only small relative increases in global carbon emissions of 1.6–2.1% or less.



Source: Bruckner, B., K. Hubacek, Y. Shan, H. Zhong and K. Feng (2022). "Impacts of poverty alleviation on national and global carbon emissions." Nature Sustainability **5(4)**: 311-320.

Costa Rica has high levels of wellbeing with a relatively low GDP and minimal pressures on the environment.



<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/>

Costa Rica – Investing in Social and Ecological Wellbeing

<https://weall.org/resource/costa-rica-investing-in-social-and-ecological-wellbeing>

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Thank you!

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