



HIGH CONSUMERS



Overconsumption definition and consumption inequalities

High consumers of energy, transport and food

Sustainable Consumption policies in the UK, Sweden and USA

Overconsumption definitions

- Critique of consumerism: Using more resources than one needs as a way to achieve happiness (related to status and cultural understanding of success)
- Ecological focus: A situation that occurs when the rate of extraction of a resource by a human population exceeds the rate of regeneration

Overconsumption definitions

- Critique of consumerism: Using more resources than one needs as a way to achieve happiness (related to status and ideas of success)

Difficulties:

- 1 Defining and measuring happiness
- 2 Quantifying and agreeing on needs of individuals
- 3 Many critiques of this type of overconsumption assume high consumption does not bring happiness

Overconsumption definitions

- Ecological focus: The rate of extraction of a resource by a human population exceeds the rate of regeneration

Difficulties:

- 1 Quantifying the maximum amount of a resource a specific population should consume, within a given time, without continually degrading the reserves of that particular resource
- 2 Quantifying and agreeing on the share of that resource each individual should be allocated
- 3 Tracing all the resources used in the production of goods and the provision of services and the required quantities of each of them

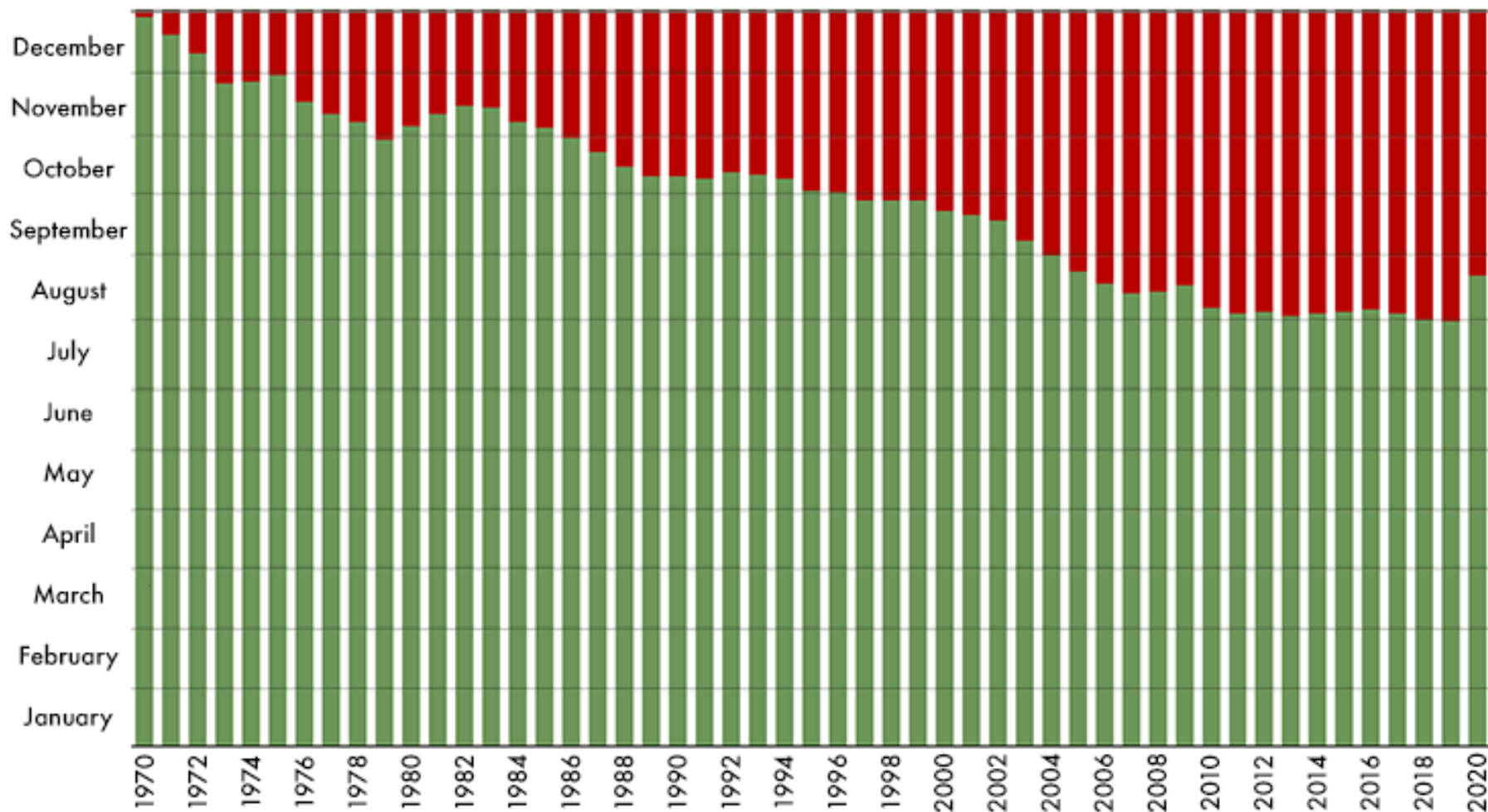


1 Earth

Earth Overshoot Day 1970 - 2020

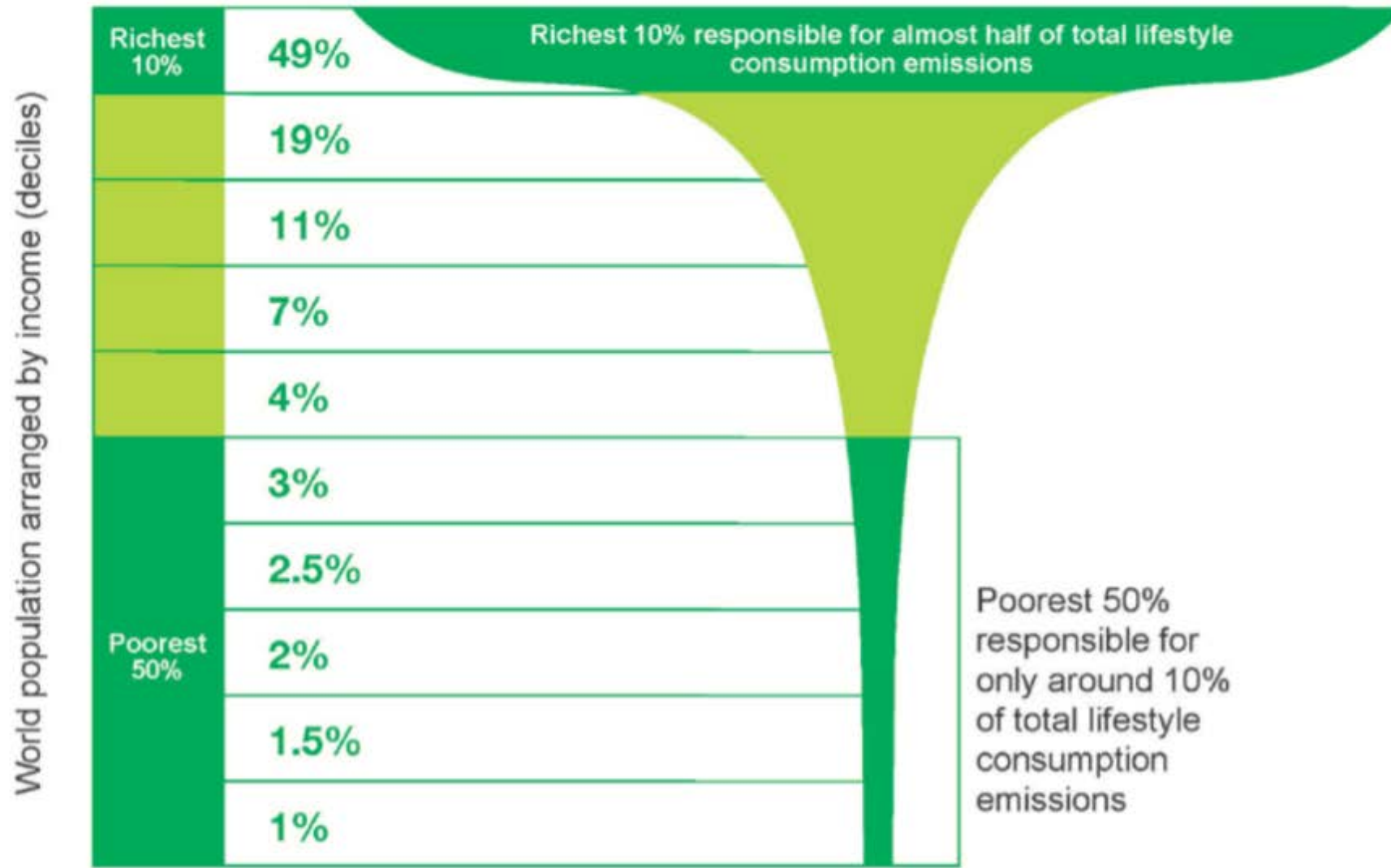


1.6 Earths

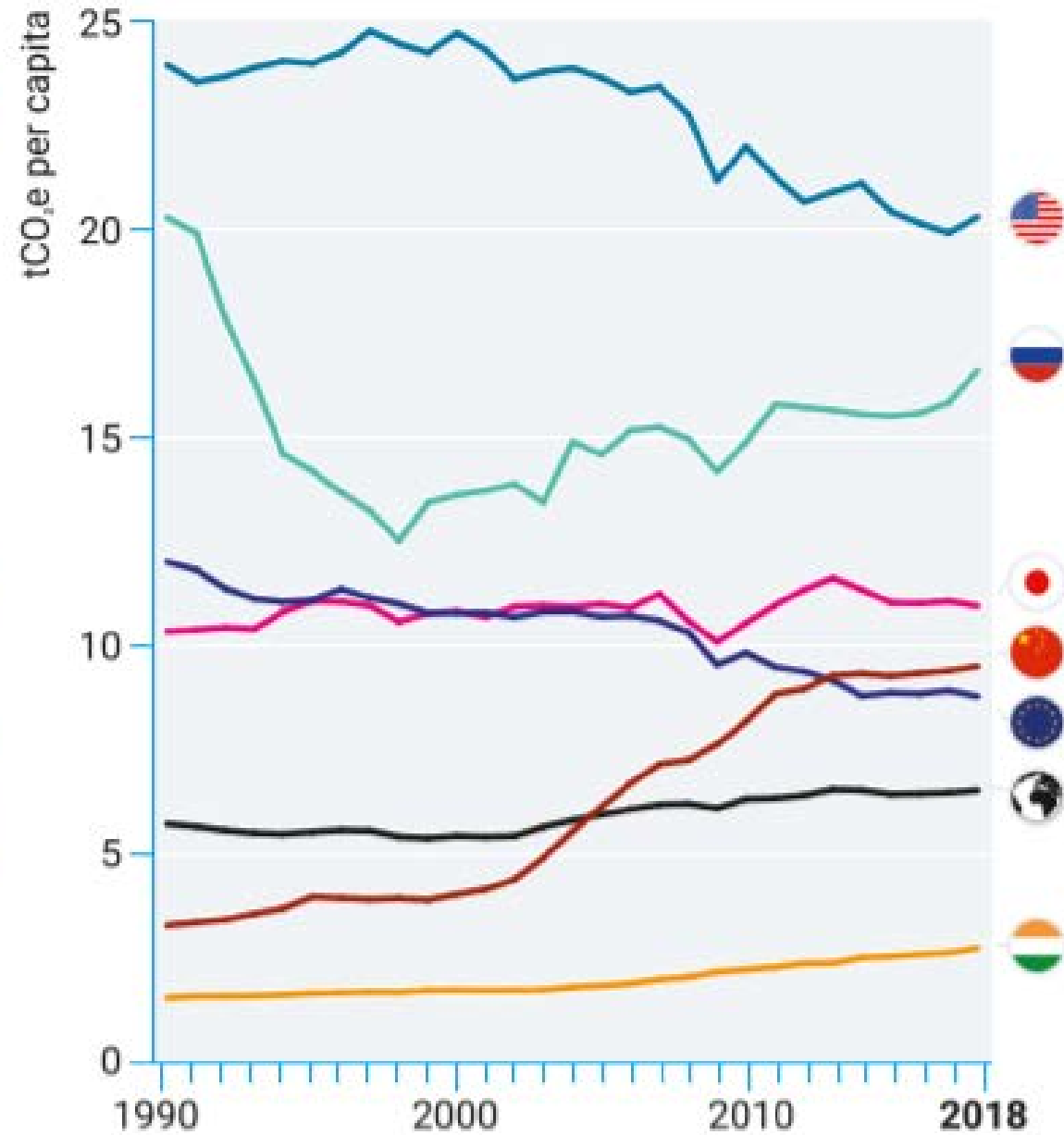
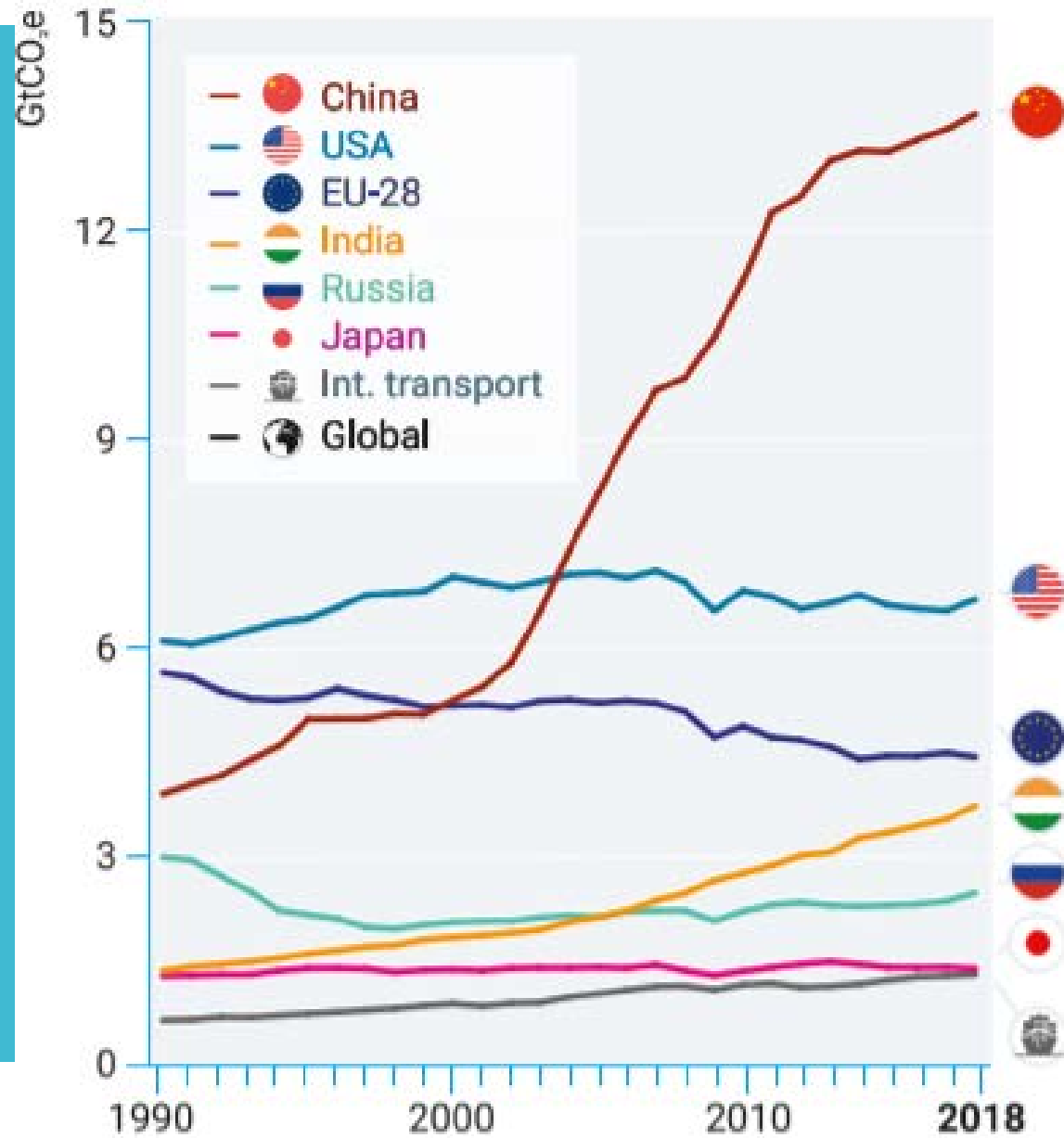


■ Resource demand exceeds Earth's biocapacity
■ Resource demand within Earth's biocapacity

Percentage of CO₂ emissions by world population



Source: Oxfam



Why focusing on high consumers?

- High consuming households/individuals have rarely been the focus of academic studies
- There are no policy initiatives targeting this group specifically
- High consumers could (hypothetically) reduce their environmental impact without suffering any damage in terms of their physical and mental well-being

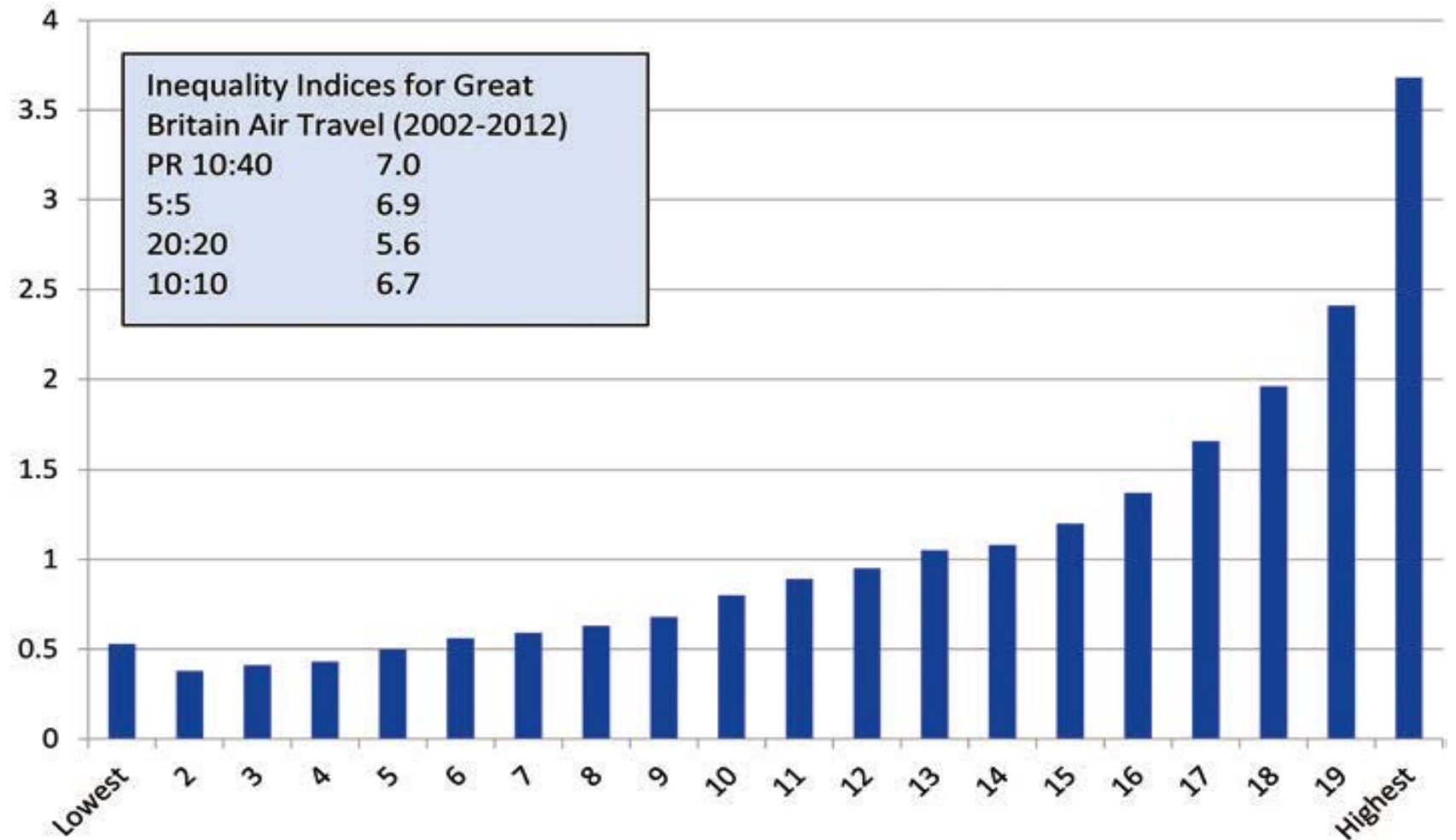
Energy

- Income inequality parallels inequality in energy use
- Influenced by geographical location, physical characteristics of buildings, composition of households, as well as the education, habits and values of occupants
- Sustainable energy use requires cultural, material and behavioural changes at different levels

Transport

- Influenced by gender, age, household structure, rural/urban location and settlement patterns
- Depends on social practices, including working, shopping, educational activities, leisure, etc.
- High income households tend to have high emissions from transport

Trips made by air per person per year 2002–2012 by income ventile
(Department for Transport, 2012, as cited in Banister, 2018).

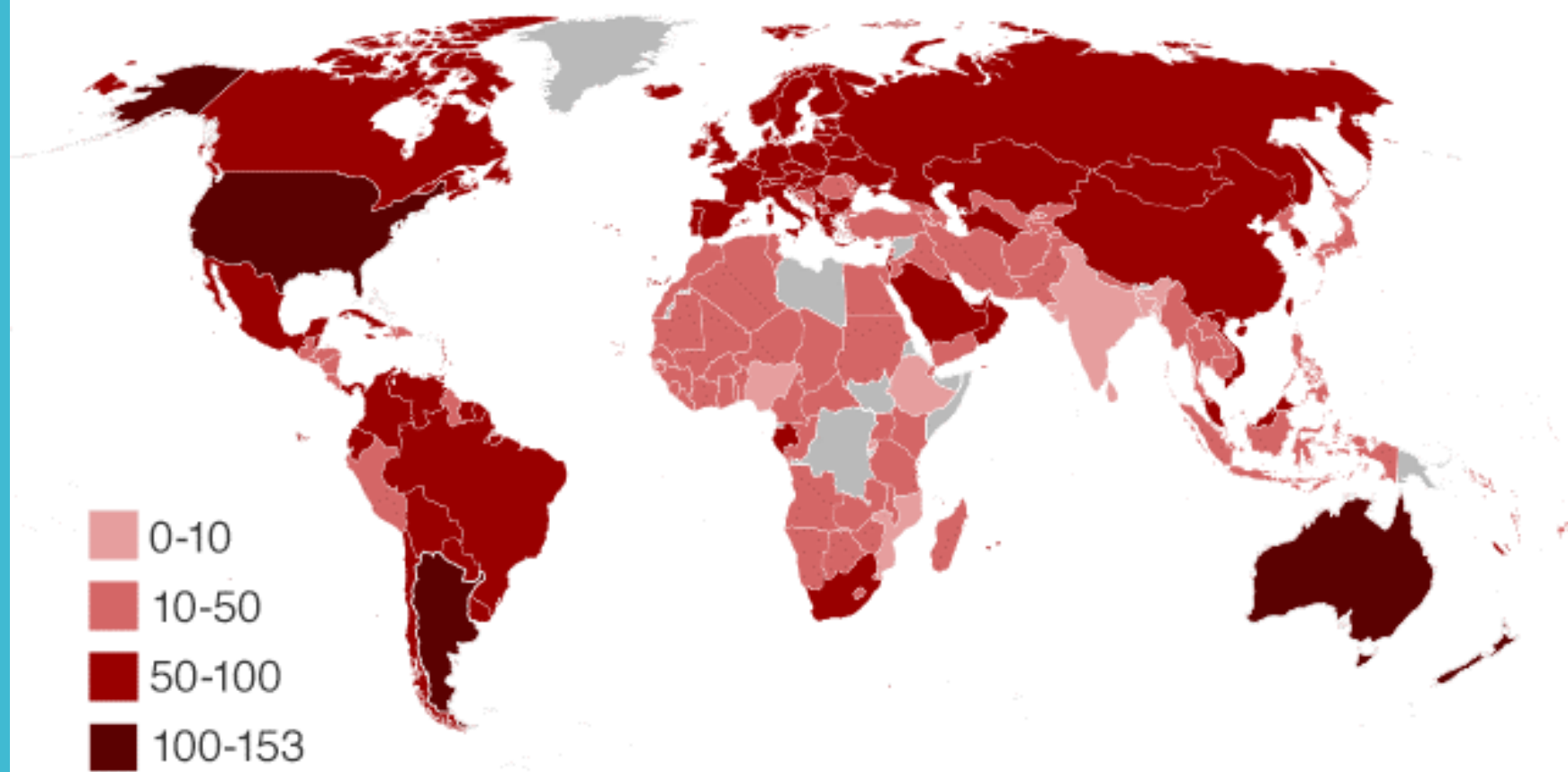


Food

- Healthy, sustainable options can be expensive
- National dietary recommendations address human health and often the environmental impact of food
- The focus on personal high intake of food as the cause of obesity overlooks other factors
- Associated to cultural values

Who eats the most meat?

Meat consumption (kg per person per year)



Sustainable Consumption policies in the UK, Sweden and USA

UK	Sweden	USA
Investing in technological development	Economic	Advice to consumers
	Administrative	
Collaboration between government, industry and consumers	Informative	
	Research and development	
Advice to consumers	Nudging	
Nudging		

Main ideas from the literature review

- Higher consumption is strongly related to higher incomes
- Overconsumption is not only an individual issue
- Producers shape public taste (design, advertisement, embedded marketing)
- Producers and consumers operate in a framework which depends on political and economic ideas
- Practices and cultural values associated to a capitalist ideology create barriers for policy targeting high consumers