



How do the poor cut carbon?

Understanding the distribution of UK CO₂ emissions

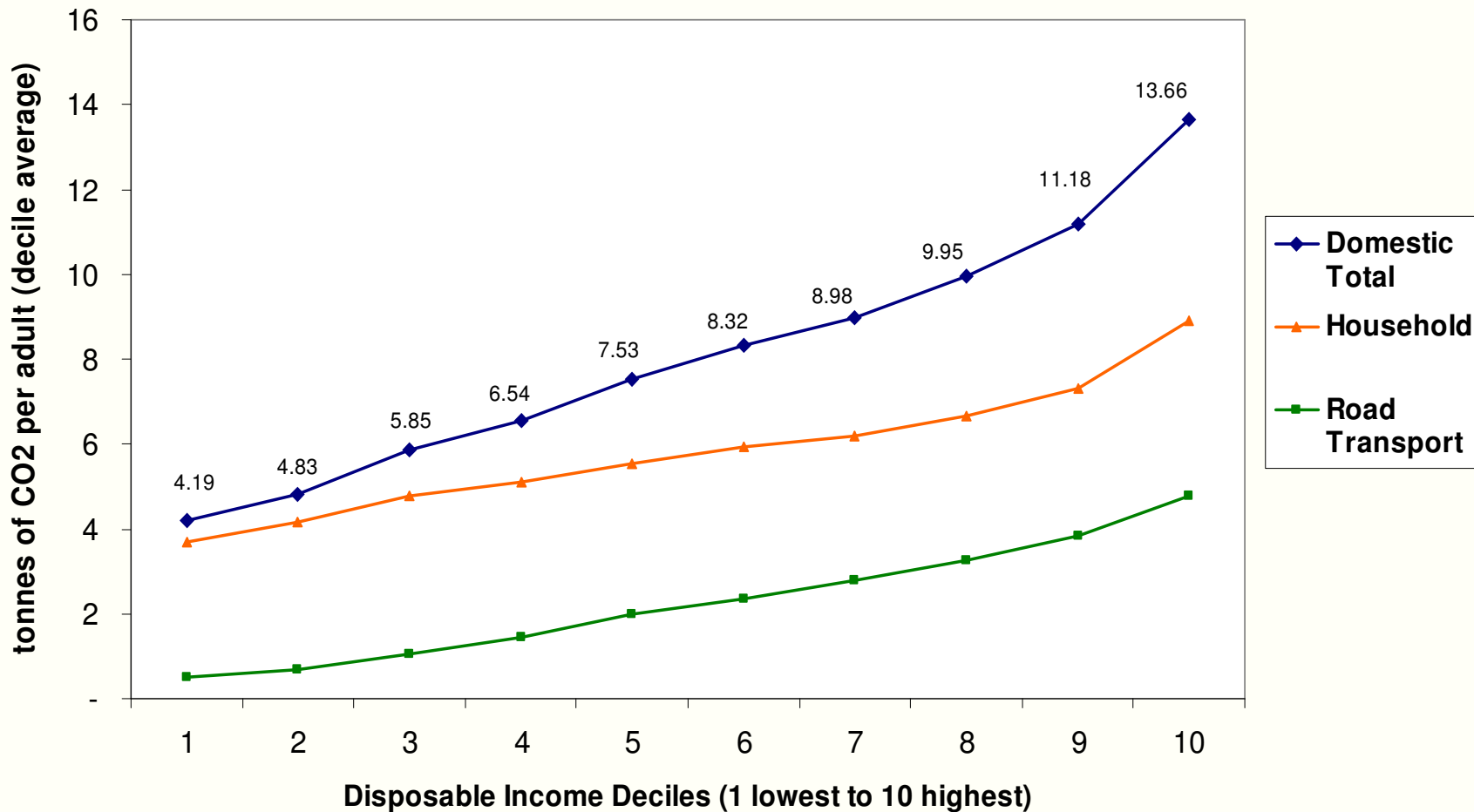
RESOLVE 'Sustainable Lives?' conference
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Outline

- The distribution of direct carbon emissions in the UK
- How the poor contribute to emissions 'reduction'
- Policy implications

Distribution of household CO₂ emissions



Cutting carbon by being poor?

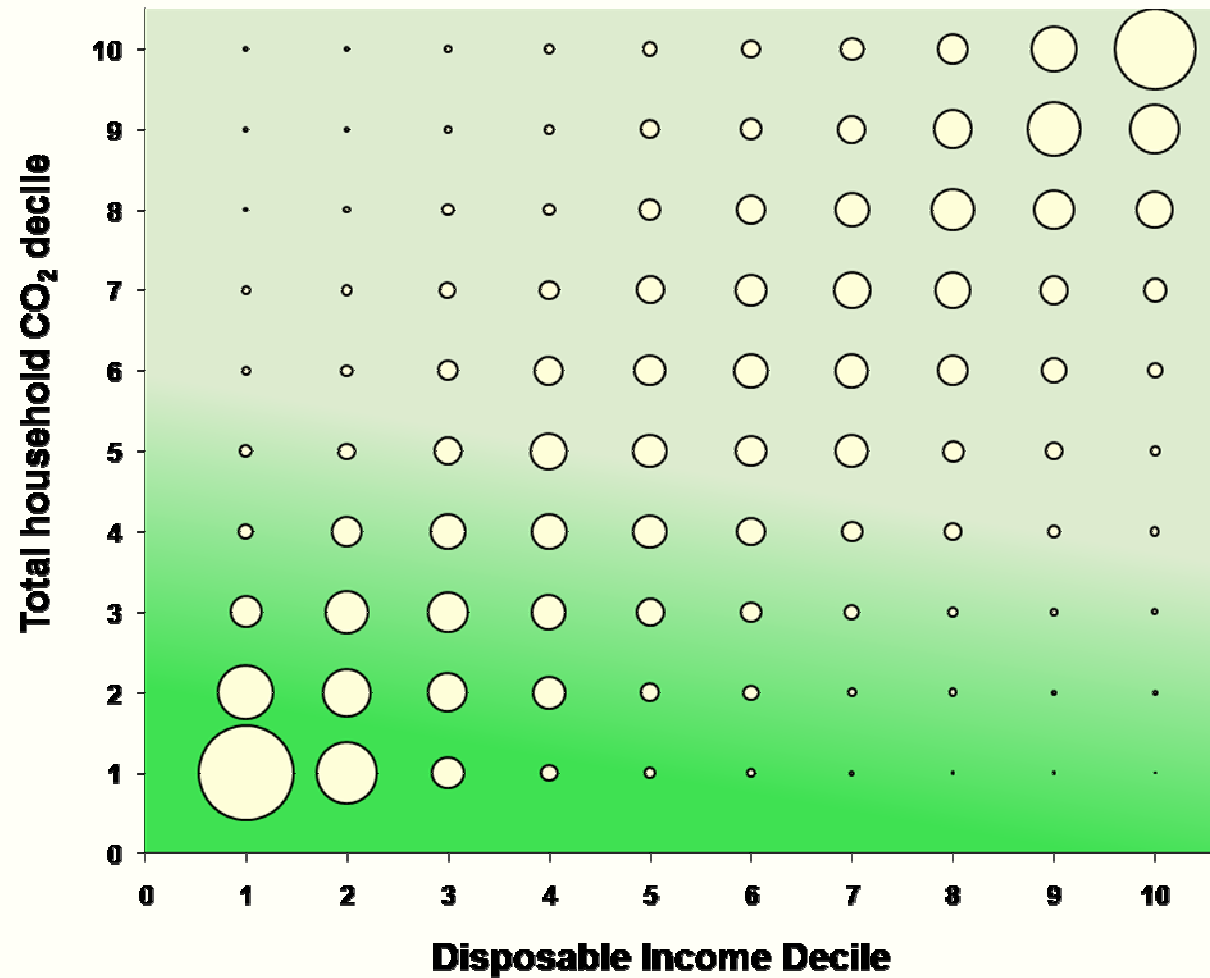


- Poorest two income deciles emit 63% less carbon than richest two deciles (by household)
- Poorest two deciles emit 45% less carbon than average (by household)

BUT

- Averages hide variations within deciles and the poor are probably cold

Distribution of household CO₂ emissions



Cutting carbon by being poor?



- Low income high emitters tend to be rural, off-gas households in solid-walled homes
- It isn't a rural transport thing
- Trying to heat 'underoccupied' larger-than-average homes also appears to be a factor
- 'Indirect' emissions likely to exaggerate distributional picture

Why isn't this ok?

- “We don’t want a society in which poor households are contributing to carbon emission reductions through their deprivation; we want them to contribute through the efforts made to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.” CSE June 2009
- “It’s not fair” – and an explicitly ‘fair’ approach is probably a vital underpinning of the social consent required for stronger policy intervention

Policy implications



- Need much better understanding of distribution of:
 - Emissions (and actual levels of service achieved)
 - Opportunities to act to cut emissions
 - Impacts of approaches to recover policy costs and distribute policy benefits
- Recovering the costs of policies through energy bills is regressive (though not necessarily wrong)
- But if no alternative funding arrangements, then need a focus on ensuring poorer households get proper share of the benefits of policies

Contacts & more information



- Centre for Sustainable Energy (www.cse.org.uk)
- Distributional impacts of personal carbon trading – for Defra (2008)
www.cse.org.uk/downloads/file/pub1106.pdf
- Assessing the social impacts of a supplier obligation – for Defra (2007)
www.cse.org.uk/downloads/file/pub1085.pdf