

**Made today, gone tomorrow?**  
**Symposium series on future trends in resource use and management**  
**7 September 2010**

# **Resources, consumption and society: can we live with less?**

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## Overview

- **The problem - a global view**
- **The UK situation**
- **Living with less?**
- **Some conclusions**

**Acknowledgement: This presentation has drawn on my work with Tim Jackson, and also draws on material from his book 'Prosperity without growth' (2009).**

Emitter	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions per capita (t CO <sub>2</sub> ) 2004	Equivalent global CO <sub>2</sub> emissions (Gt CO <sub>2</sub> ) 2004	Equivalent number of sustainable carbon budgets
World	4.5	29	
Australia	16.2	104	
Canada	20.0	129	
France	6.0	39	
Germany	9.8	63	
Italy	7.8	50	
Japan	9.9	63	
Netherlands	8.7	56	
Spain	7.6	49	
United Kingdom	9.8	63	
United States	20.6	132	

Source: UN Development Programme <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/data/climatechange/planets/>

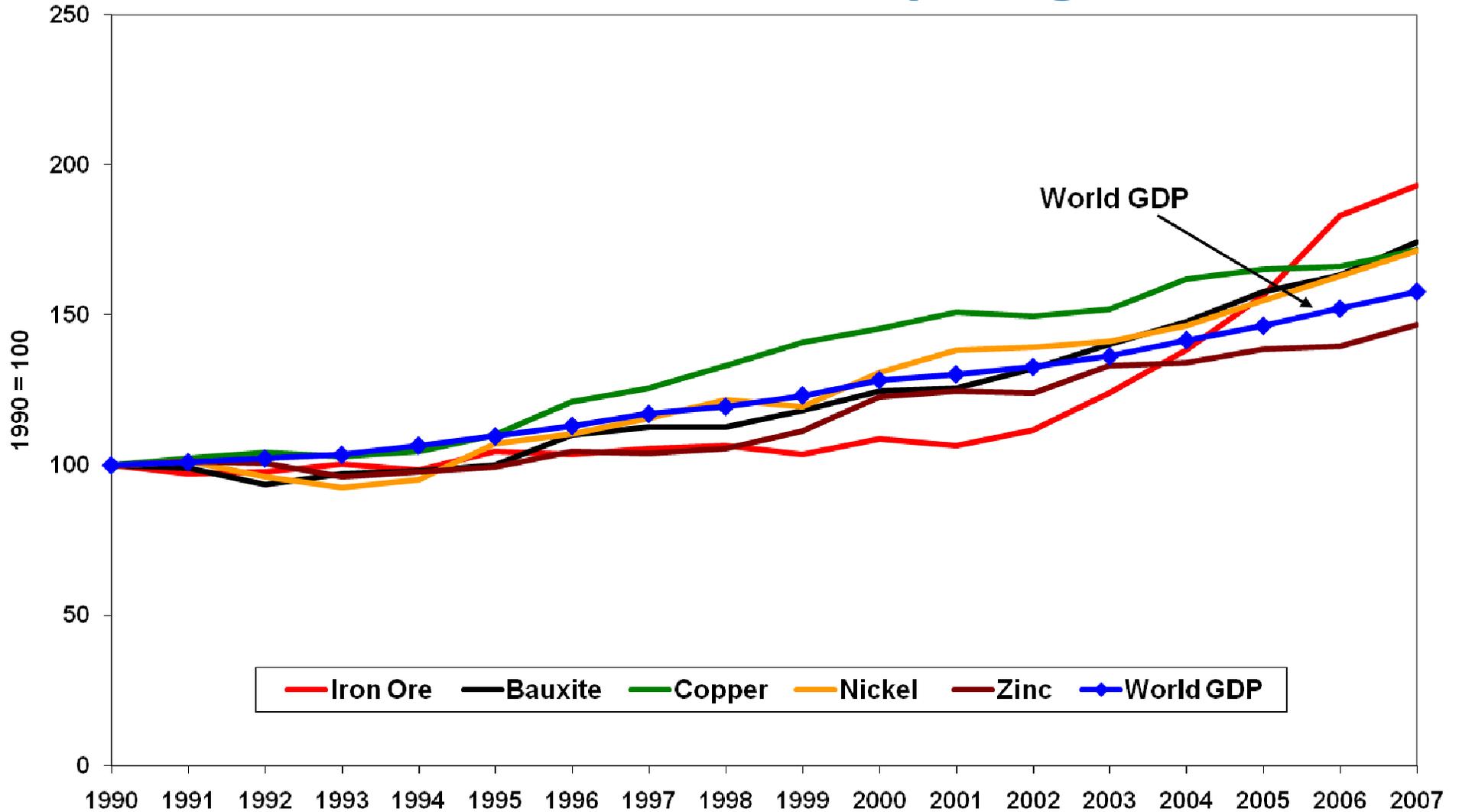
- **Can technology be the solution?**
- **Some lessons from the past:**

**Decoupling:**  
**'breaking the link between**  
**"economic goods" and**  
**"environmental bads".**

- **What are the prospects for extreme decoupling?**

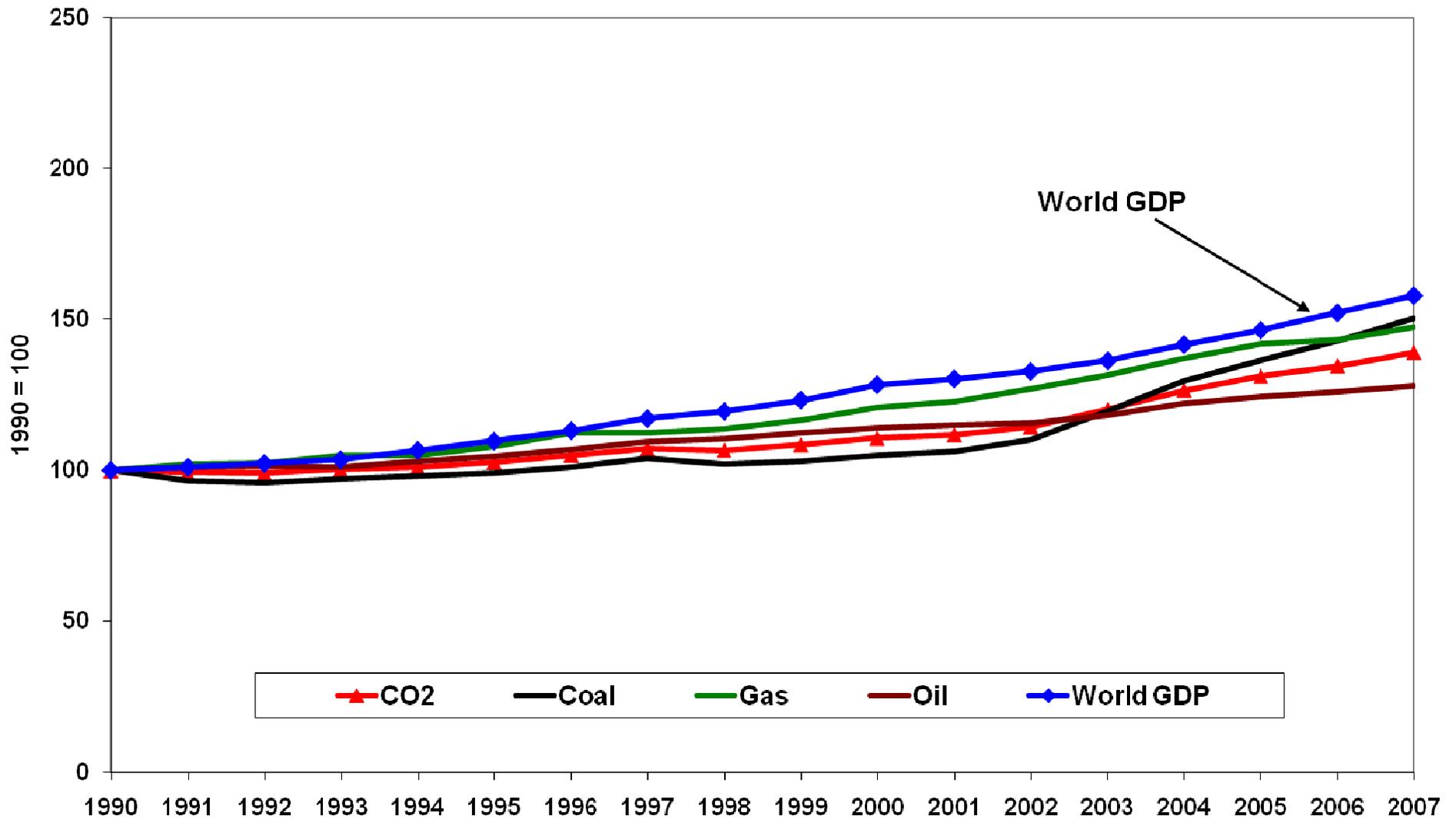


# Resource decoupling?



Source: *Prosperity without growth*, Tim Jackson 2009, London, Earthscan

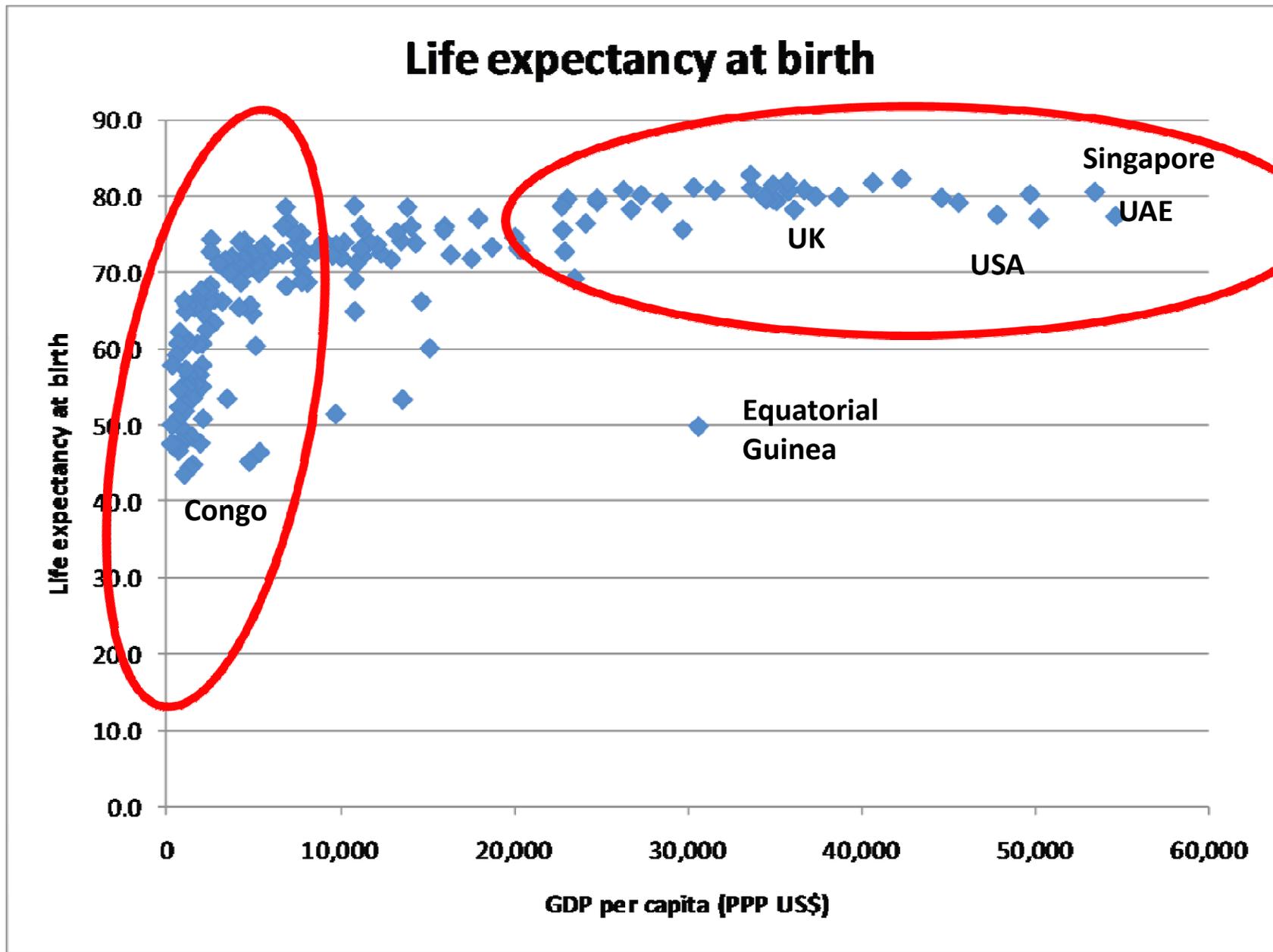
# Energy decoupling?



Source: *Prosperity without growth*, Tim Jackson 2009, London, Earthscan

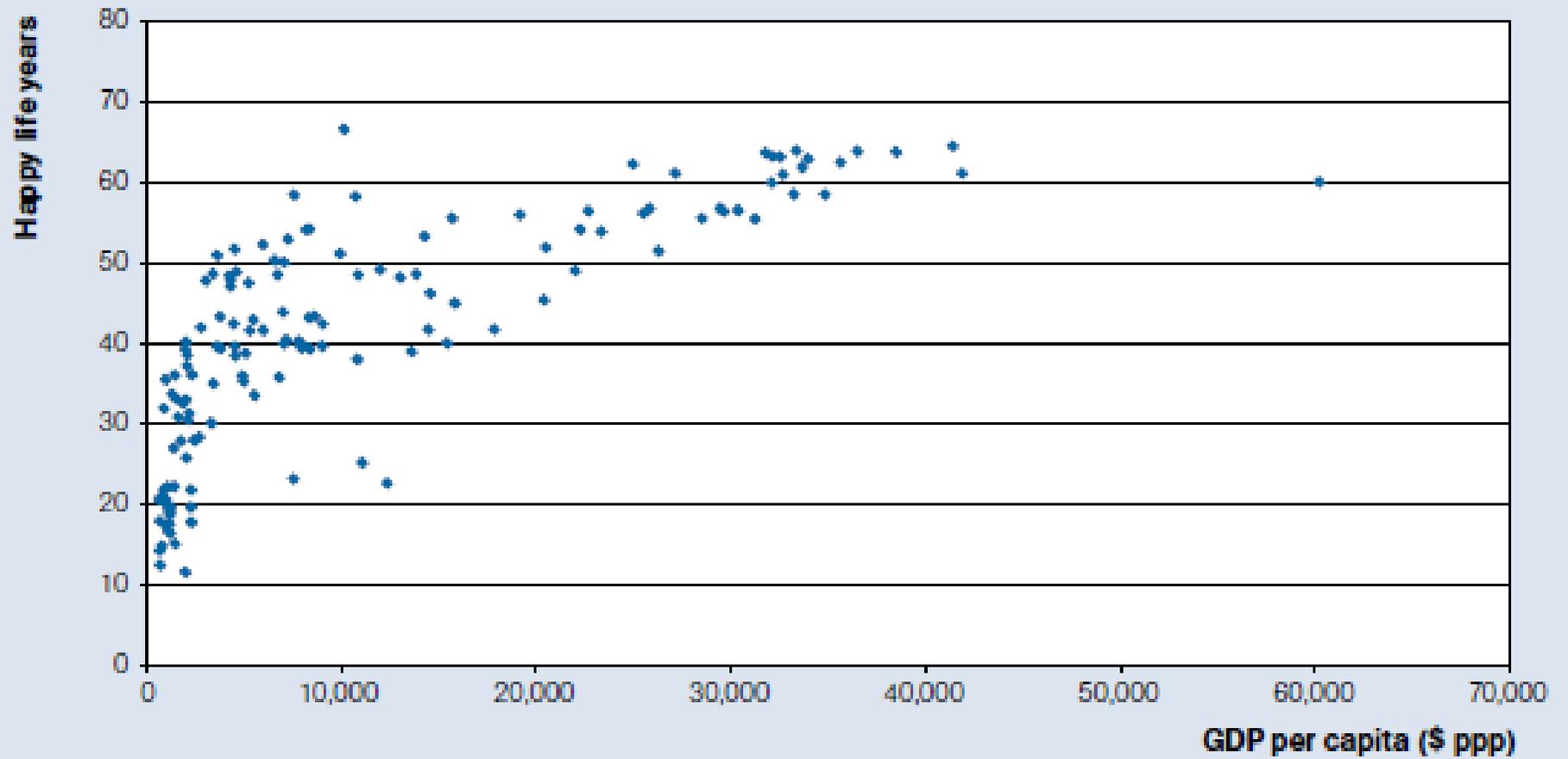


**Is ever increasing expenditure necessary?**



Data from UN Human development index 2007. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/data/>

Figure 6: Scatter plot of happy life years vs. GDP per capita, by country



Source: *nef Happy Planet Index*

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# A matter of perspective....

## Production Perspective

- Resource use/wastes attributed to UK *production*;
- Includes exports, excludes imports;

## Consumption Perspective

- Resource use/wastes attributable to UK *consumption*;
- Includes imports, excludes exports;



**Difference is the resource use/wastes embodied in trade**

- Estimates taken from the UK Environmental Accounts.

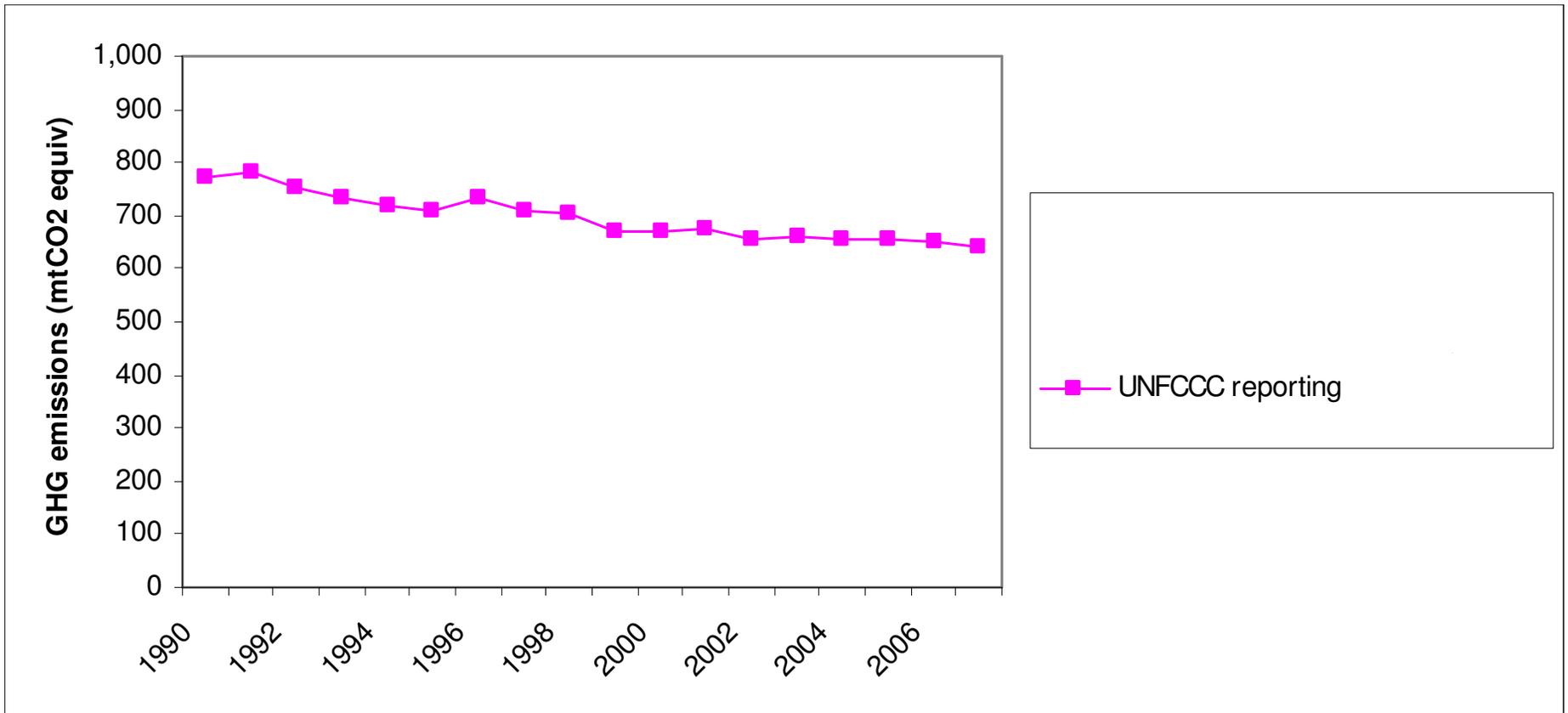
- Estimated using *SELMA*  
- The Surrey Environmental Lifestyle MApping framework.

***“Britain has already cut 21% of  
emissions since 1990”***

Ed Miliband, Secretary of State of Energy and Climate Change,  
Forward to The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan. July 2009



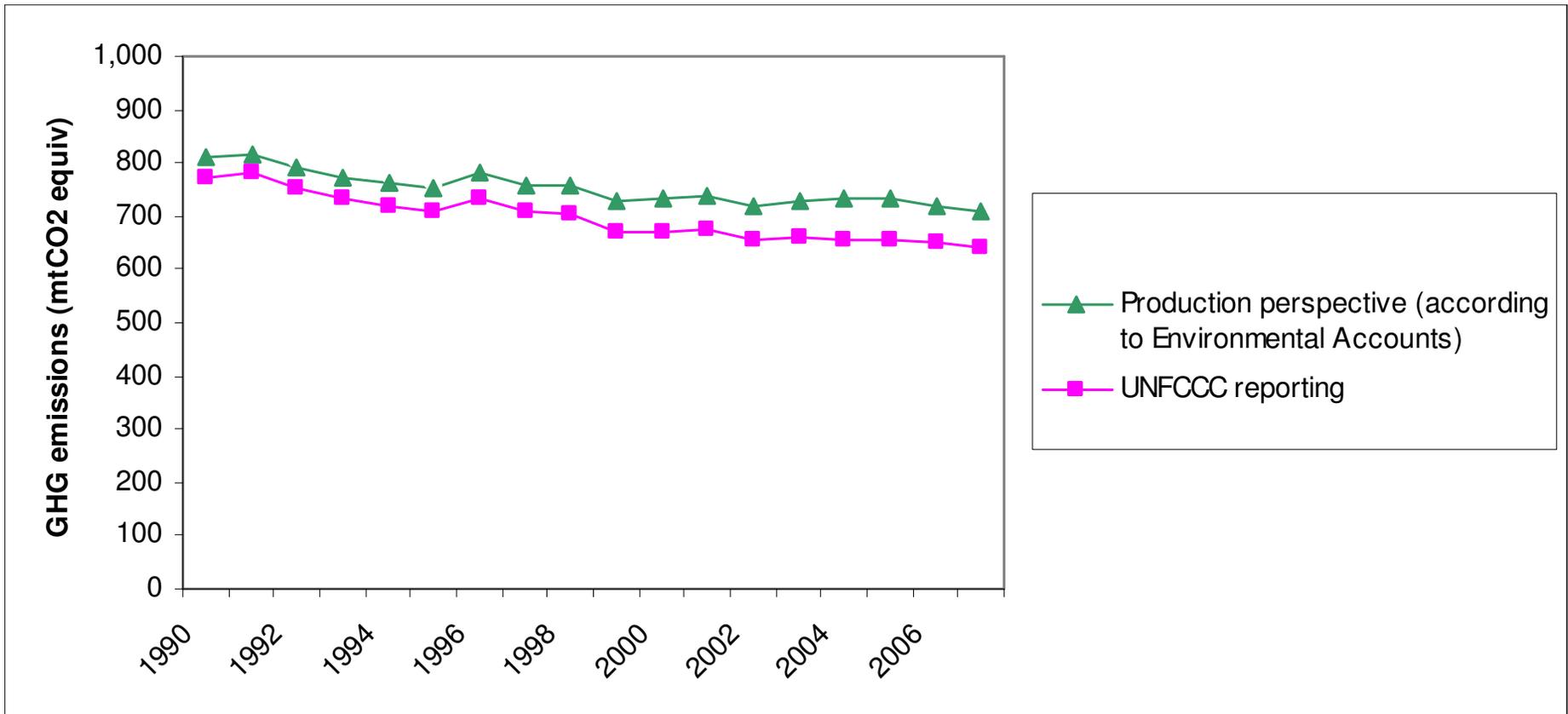
# UK greenhouse gas emissions



Kyoto reporting

Source: *Druckman and Jackson 2009*

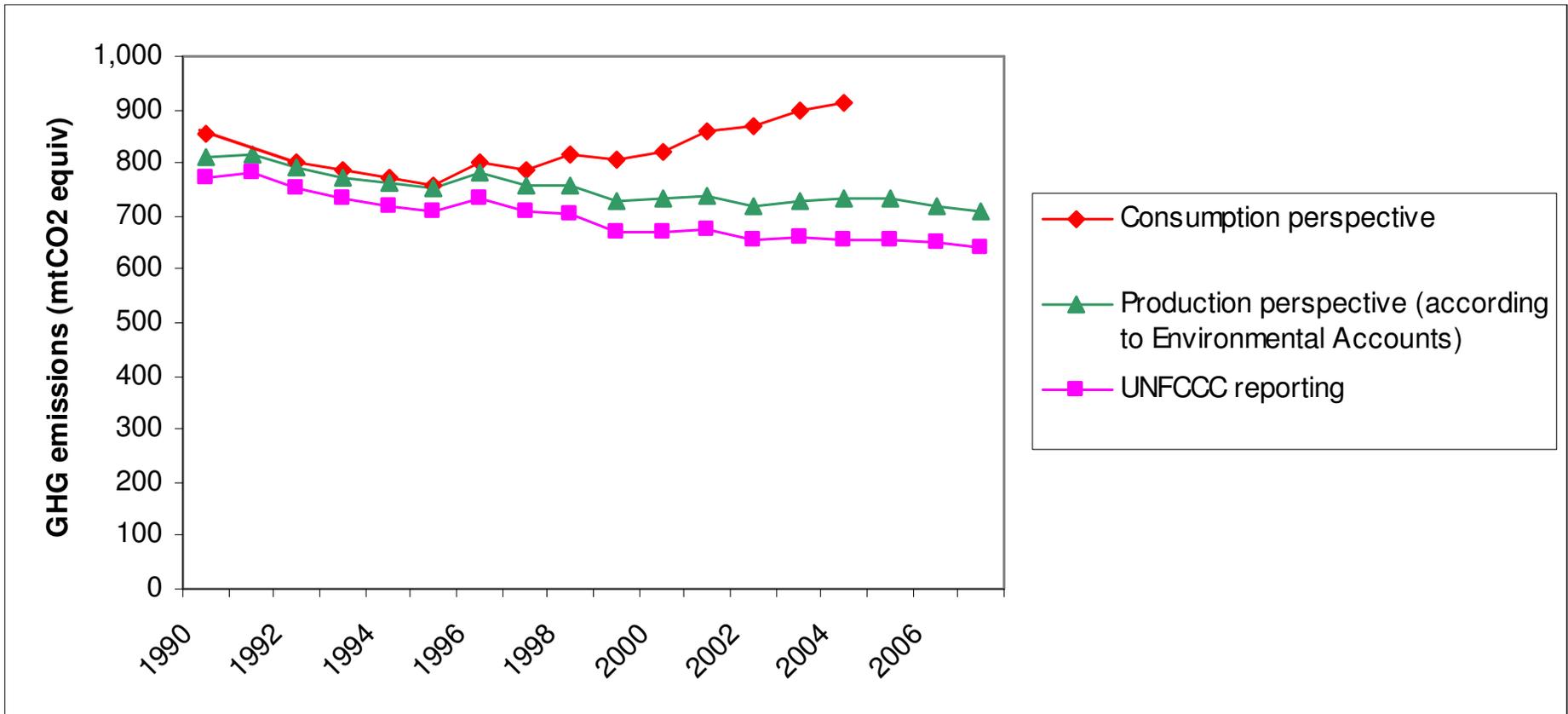
# UK greenhouse gas emissions



....adding in international aviation and shipping emissions.

Source: *Druckman and Jackson 2009*

# UK greenhouse gas emissions



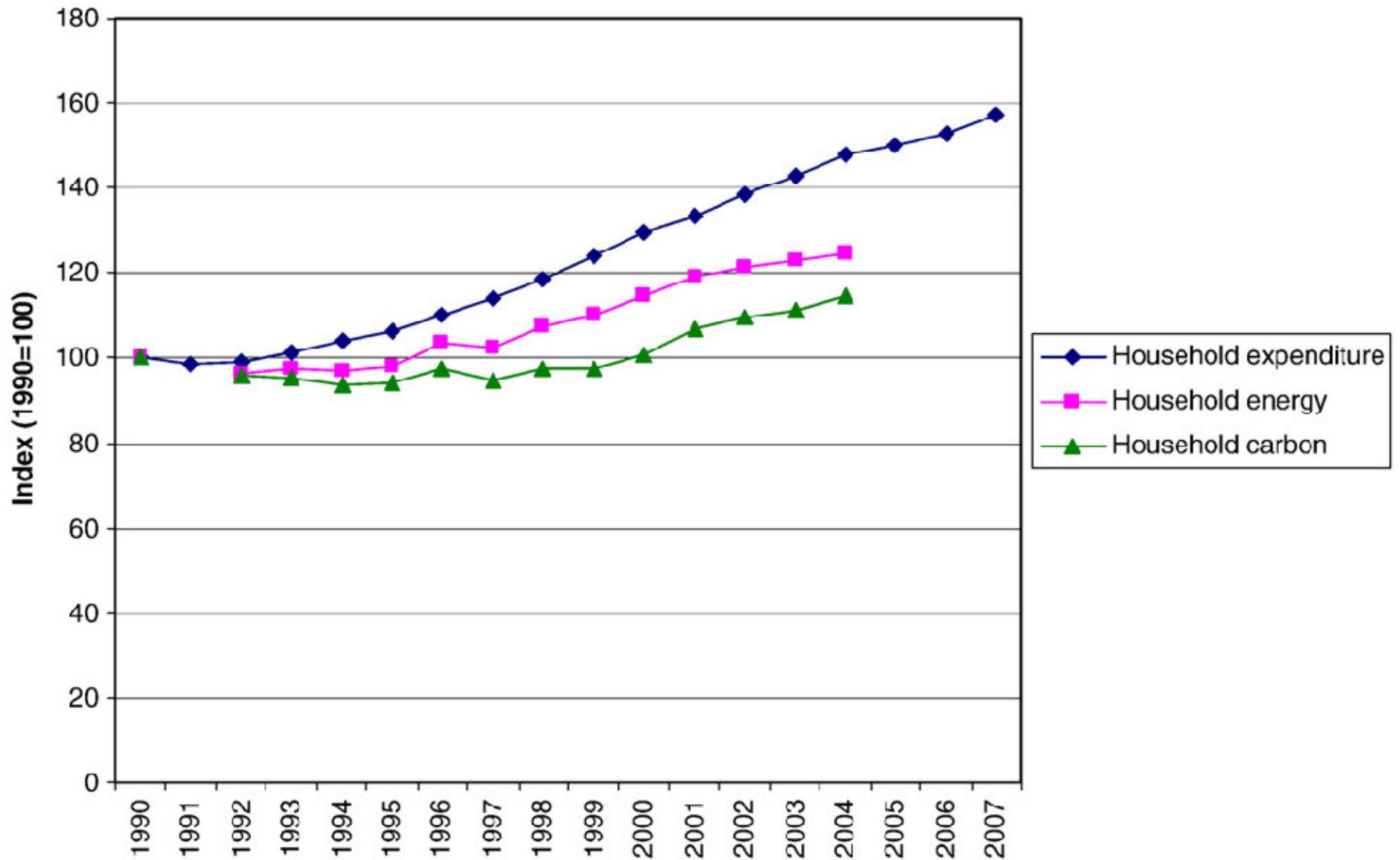
emissions attributed to UK **consumption**

Source: *Druckman and Jackson 2009*

- **Are we achieving decoupling in the UK?**
  - **Is decoupling occurring between UK household expenditure and energy use?**



## Trends in UK household expenditure, energy use and CO<sub>2</sub> indexed to 1990=100



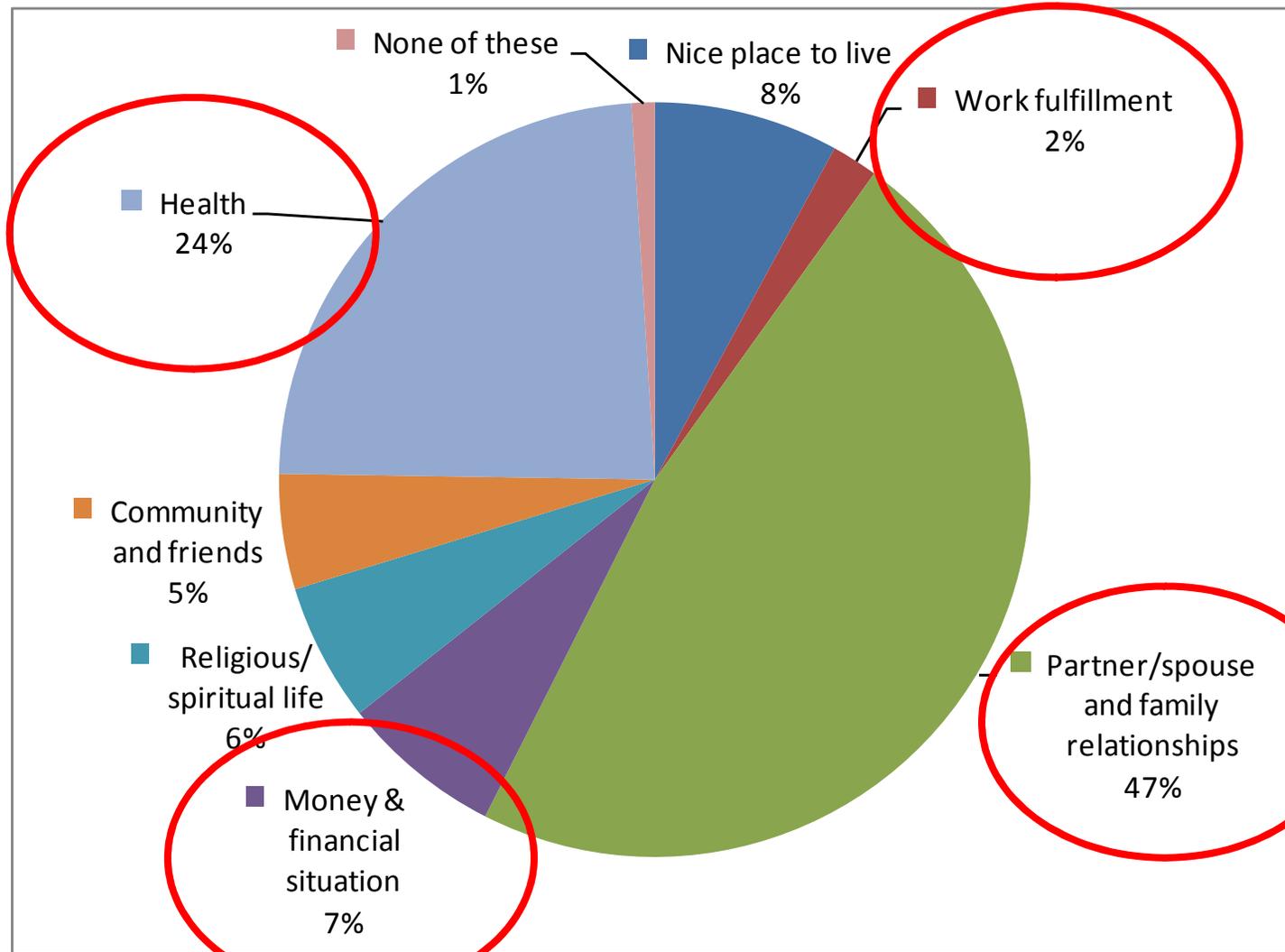
Source: *Druckman and Jackson 2009*



## The “Good Life”?

- % UK citizens reporting themselves ‘very happy’ declined from 52% in 1957 to 36% before the recession;
- Rates of stress and depression are increasing (de Botton 2004);
- The high levels of inequality in UK society are detrimental to well-being (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009).
- What would make us happy?

# Which of the following is most important to you with regard to your own happiness and well-being?



Source: *GfK NOP Poll, Oct 2005*. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/29\\_03\\_06\\_happiness\\_gfcpoll.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/29_03_06_happiness_gfcpoll.pdf)



**... so why are our lives so material intensive?**

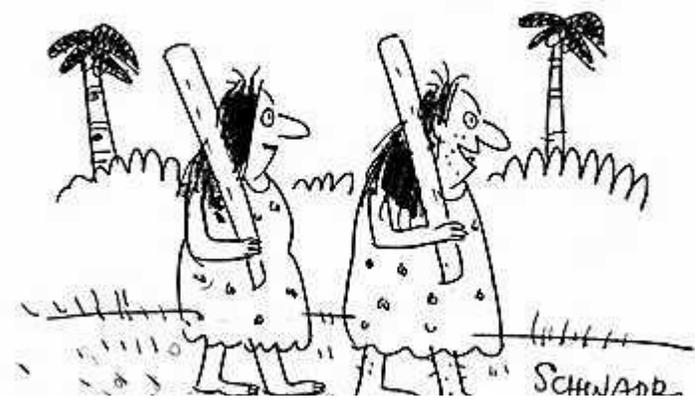
85% books on  
Ebay unread



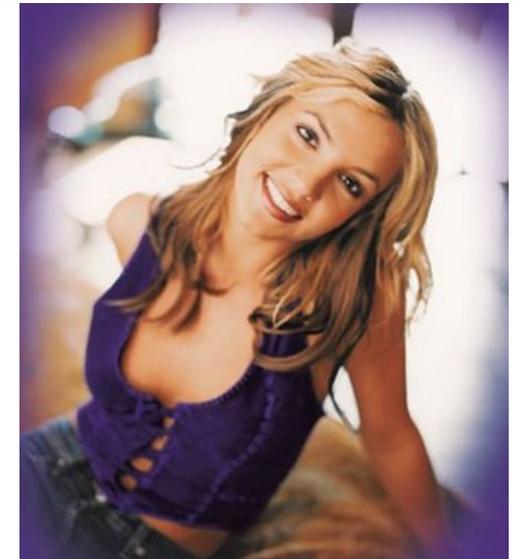
## Some motivations for purchase of non-used products

- Low cost and impulse buying:  
*“I bought three T-shirts for \$19.99 because they were cheap”;*
- Self improvement  
– *“I bought an ab-roller because I wanted a tight mid-section like Britney Spears has”;*
- Search fatigue;
- Difficulties in product use & maintenance.

(Trocchia and Janda, 2002)



search ID: hsc3515



# Role of material goods

Mark occasions

Warmth

Security

Status

Identity

Belonging

Search for life partner

Food

# Status

- Shows of opulence;
- Status is comparative;
- Cause of anxiety;
- Use of material goods to demonstrate status is a flawed mechanism:
  - net nil sum gain.



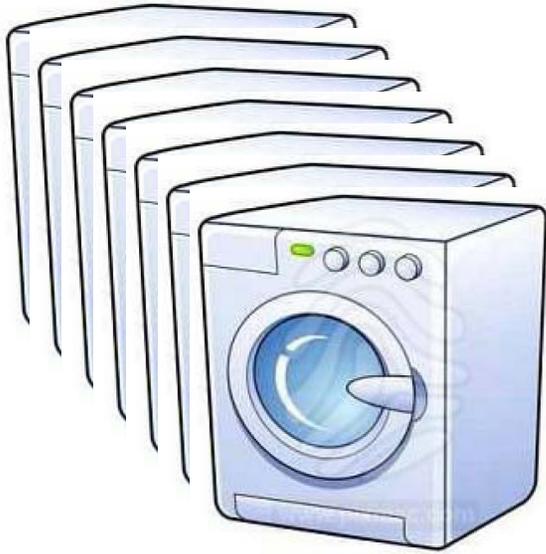


“In the last ten years have you *voluntarily* made a long-term change in your lifestyle, other than planned retirement, which has resulted in you earning less money?”

**Downshifting in Britain: A sea-change in the pursuit of happiness (Hamilton 2003)**



**Institutional lock-in: driver of resource use and wastes.**



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**Institutional lock-in: driver of resource use and wastes.**

# Summary

- Western countries are exceeding the Earth's capacity to provide;
- Decoupling through technological developments is unlikely to be adequate;
- Focus on what humans need for flourishing;
- Investment in infrastructure;
- Reduce levels of inequality;
- Change social norms towards less consumption-focused way of life.



# Selected References

- Jackson, T. (2009). Prosperity without growth - economics for a finite planet. London, UK, Earthscan.
- Druckman, A. and T. Jackson (2009). "The carbon footprint of UK households 1990-2004: a socio-economically disaggregated, quasi-multiregional input-output model." Ecological Economics 68 (7): 2066–2077.
- Druckman, A. and T. Jackson (2009). Mapping our carbon responsibilities: more key results from the Surrey Environmental Lifestyle MApping (SELMA) framework. RESOLVE Working Paper 02-09, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK. Available from [http://www.surrey.ac.uk/resolve/Docs/WorkingPapers/RESOLVE\\_WP\\_02-09.pdf](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/resolve/Docs/WorkingPapers/RESOLVE_WP_02-09.pdf) .

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