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Spatial Economics Research Centre

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Carbon Footprints

Academics are sometimes accused of undertaking extensive research to "prove the bleeding obvious". It's nice to see that the media can manage that too - witness the BBC's headline that "[the rich have the biggest carbon footprints in the UK](#)".

I did have two questions after reading the article. First, the map made me wonder what would happen if you regressed carbon per household on socio-economic characteristics and tried to figure out whether there are place based effects? As the BBC kindly provide the data, one could go ahead and do this. I assumed someone would already have done it (given the kind of statements people make about how some kinds of urban spaces are more environmentally friendly than others) but I couldn't dig out a reference quickly on google scholar.

Second, why do people always suggest that taxing things has to cost poor people more? I get this kind of comment when talking about [congestion pricing for roads](#). If the poor are already the lowest polluters this helps reduce the regressiveness of these taxes, not increase them (even if the BBC article implies the opposite). It's the share of these goods as the proportion of income and the details of any tax that will matter for whether or not environmental taxes are regressive.

Posted by [Prof Henry G. Overman](#) on [Friday, December 04, 2009](#)

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