

10 arguments for restricting one's consumption to the world average income adjusted for purchasing power parity:

1. the argument of maximum benefit:
The benefit derived from expenditure varies as the inverse of the log of the level of the expenditure. So the most efficient increase in benefit comes from raising the lowest. If everyone acted persistently on the principle of raising the lowest, the end result would be a Gini coefficient of zero: maximum benefit would be reached when everyone lived on the world average income. (Proviso: obviously Amartya Sen is right that it makes more sense to aim for equality of capability than equality of income, but both political consensus, more research, coercion, and a huge bureaucracy would be necessary to implement equality of capabilities. Presently, demanding only that is simply procrastination, when one can seek equality of expenditure as a first approximation of equality of capability.)
2. the argument from debt:
The rich countries are rich because of their history of unfair trade practices and their present dominant position in unequal trade. European dominance got its original impetus from the rapacity of the Spanish and Portuguese, then of the French, British, and Americans. The current level of extraction of wealth from poor countries nets 11% of the US average income, 18% of the British, and deprives India of 25% of its GDP. Morally we owe this money.
3. the argument of limited carrying capacity:
The world has overreached its carrying capacity. (Lester Brown, Eco-economy.) No sustainable economy is possible without redistribution of income because it is transparent hypocrisy to demand that the poor and poor countries restrict themselves when they consume far less than we do. (The problem is not overpopulation, but over-consumption: the average American consumes 80 times the energy of the average Indian.) If the American way of life does not become negotiable, we are all doomed.
4. the argument of peace:
The current dominance of the G8 over the poor countries cannot be maintained without the continuous threat of violence, and the threat of violence cannot be perpetuated without actual violence. Since WWII, all US military action has been aggressive, and all of it directed to keeping the dollar overvalued relative to other currencies. Economic domino theory: purpose is to maintain willingness to be US service economies. It's a pattern of extension and ingestion; when the dollar is very overvalued, the US uses aggression to secure more resources on better terms, knowing that the military expenditure and international stress will temporarily weaken the dollar. Aggression stops when dollar falls sufficiently for corporations to lose some ability to extract cheap labour from poor countries. When the new acquisition is secure and begins to produce returns, dollar gains in value and US again risks major aggression. The way to peace is to relinquish the need to dominate, BOTH economically and politically, for US politics acts wholly in the interests of US money; to the extent to which we maintain US way of life and pay taxes, we're part of this system.
5. the argument of health: sociology of medicine:

The rich are healthier than the poor. People in egalitarian societies are healthier than people in hierarchical societies. The richer a society is, the more significant the second pattern becomes relative to the first. (This is what one would expect from the law of diminishing returns.) See Richard Wilkinson's *The Impact of Inequality* and *Sick Societies*.

6. the argument of happiness: psychology of developed capitalist societies:
People who seek sufficiency are happier than those who seek to maximize their own benefits. Barry Schwartz in the Paradox of Choice presents the psychological evidence that the law of diminishing returns is true, though he does not seem to realize it. (He mentions only the law of marginal utility, which is only a special case of the LDR, and doesn't recognize that what he calls "adaptation" is identical to the LDR itself.)
7. the argument against hypocrisy of special pleading:
If I justify withholding my excess from the poor on the basis that I need what I have more than those poorer than I am need it, I assert a double standard. Once I know that expenditures are beneficial in proportion to the inverse log of the level of expenditure, how can I claim that those with less have less need? Instead, I am testifying to only to my own adaptation to luxury, which is itself an instance of the LDR.)
8. the argument for community & against "materialism" in popular parlance sense:
The idiomatic sense of "materialism" is simply to act as if things were more important than people. The rich who purchase possessions rather than using their income to benefit people tacitly assert that the possessions are more valuable than people. This is an injury and insult to the community of persons.
9. the argument from anthropology:
No modern society is as egalitarian as the original hunting and gathering societies in which everyone had equal access to local resources, differentiated only by transient variations in individual capacity, and in which custom lessened even those differences by requiring the sharing of food. The principle with which humans evolved was the tacit assumption that people were entitled to equal access to common property. Confining one's expenditures to the world average income is a way to reconstruct that original tacit assumption.
10. the argument of efficiency of use of human capacities to satisfy desires:
Wealth is only a form of power. Embodied wealth is simply the right to marginalize others from that which one wants to enjoy exclusively. Liquid wealth is simply the divisible and transferable form of command. Those who accumulate wealth accumulate the power to have others do what the wealthy want rather than what the constrained poor would choose to do on their own. One brain, the brain of the rich man, commands many bodies, whose actions serve to magnify the will of the rich. Whether as slavery, serfdom, or wage slavery, this necessarily entails a loss of the ability of the poor to use their own intelligence and will to satisfy their own desires, and so a loss of humanity to humanity as a whole.