

## Topic # 11: The standard of living debate.

(\* -DL) Lindert and Williamson (1983), “English Workers’ Living Standards During the Industrial Revolution”, Economic History Review, Pg. 1-25.

(\* -DL) Williamson (1981), “Urban Disamenities, Dark Satanic Mills and the British Standard of Living Debate”, Journal of Economic History, Pg. 75-84.

(\* -DL) Clark (2005), “The Condition of the Working Class in England, 1209-2004”, Journal of Political Economy, Pg. 1307-40.

- Question: Who benefited from the first industrial revolution?
- Theory: Measuring standards of living.
- Evidence: Real wages and living conditions in British cities.

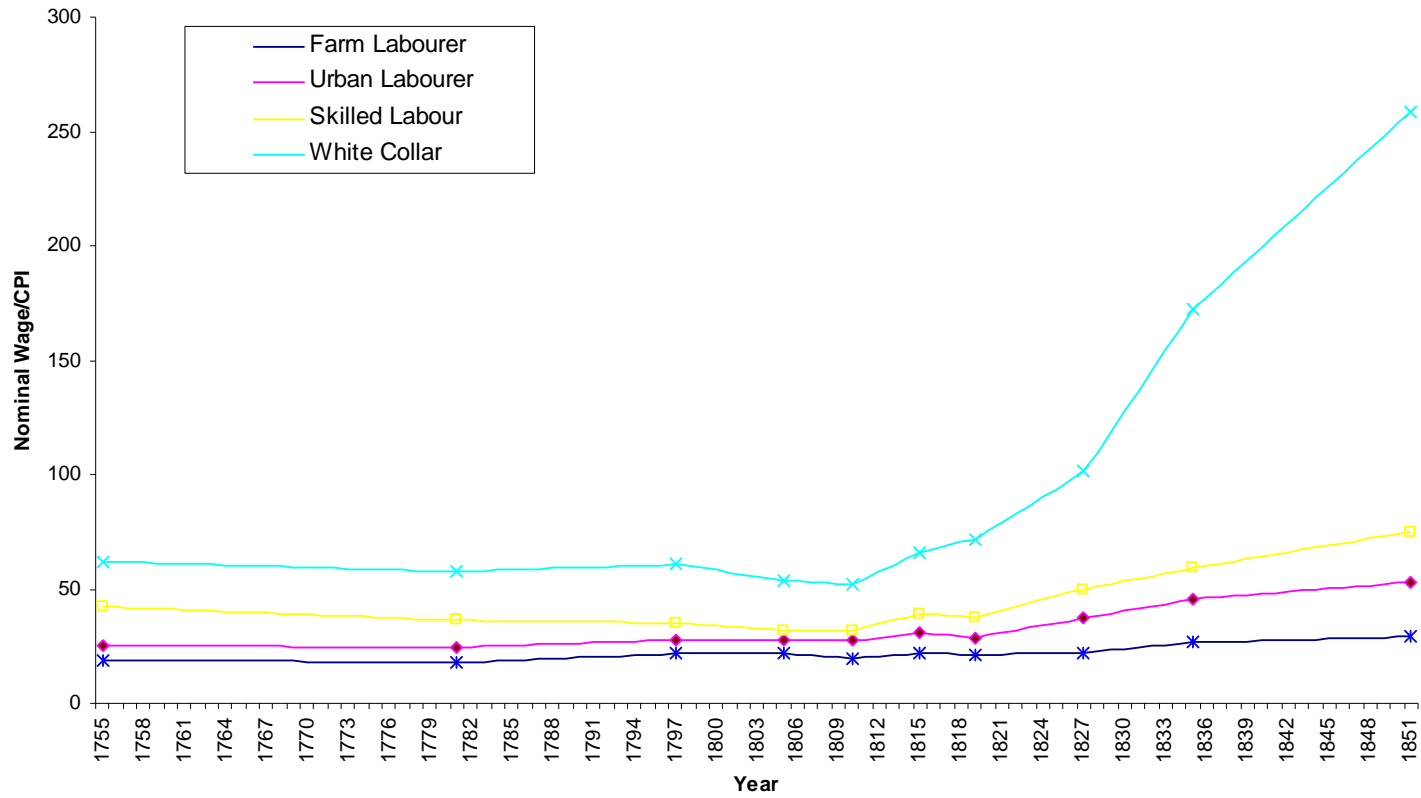
- The Standard of Living Debate:
  - o Pessimist View:
    - Slowly rising real wages
    - Longer work hours
    - Higher morbidity and mortality
    - Pollution and water-borne disease
    - Crowding and high urban densities
    - Deteriorating working and living conditions
    - Rising inequality
    - Rising child and female wage labour

## o Optimist View:

- Real wages rise after 1820
- Urban and rural morbidity and mortality falling
- Unskilled wages rise faster than white collar wages or land owner income
- Female and child labour protected by legislation (and relative wages rising)
- Urban premium to compensate for disamenities small (and insignificant in aggregate)

∴ urban centres were unhealthy and unpleasant, but rural-urban migration was rapid and differentials were improving throughout 19<sup>th</sup> century.

British Real Wages  
Lindert and Williamson (1983), Table 5



### British Unskill Urban Real Wages (Allen 2007 Appendix 2)

