

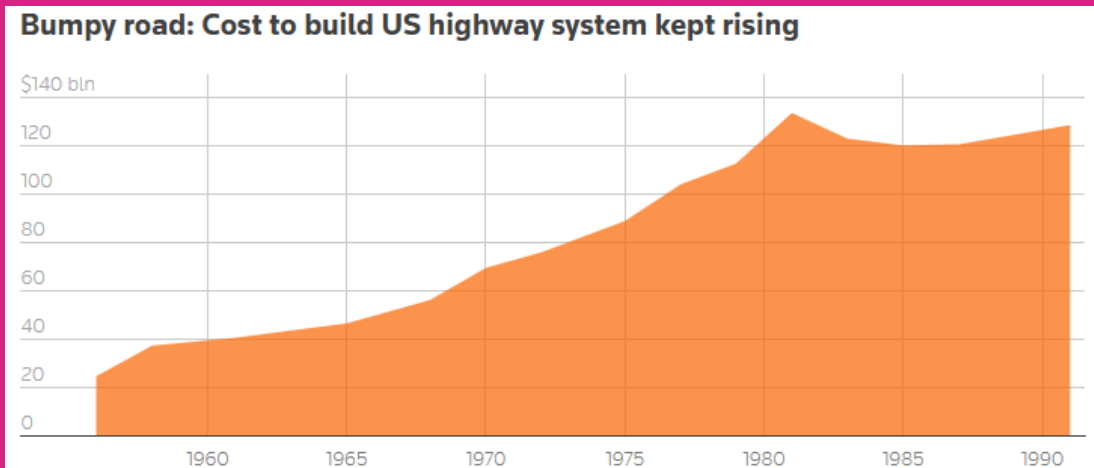
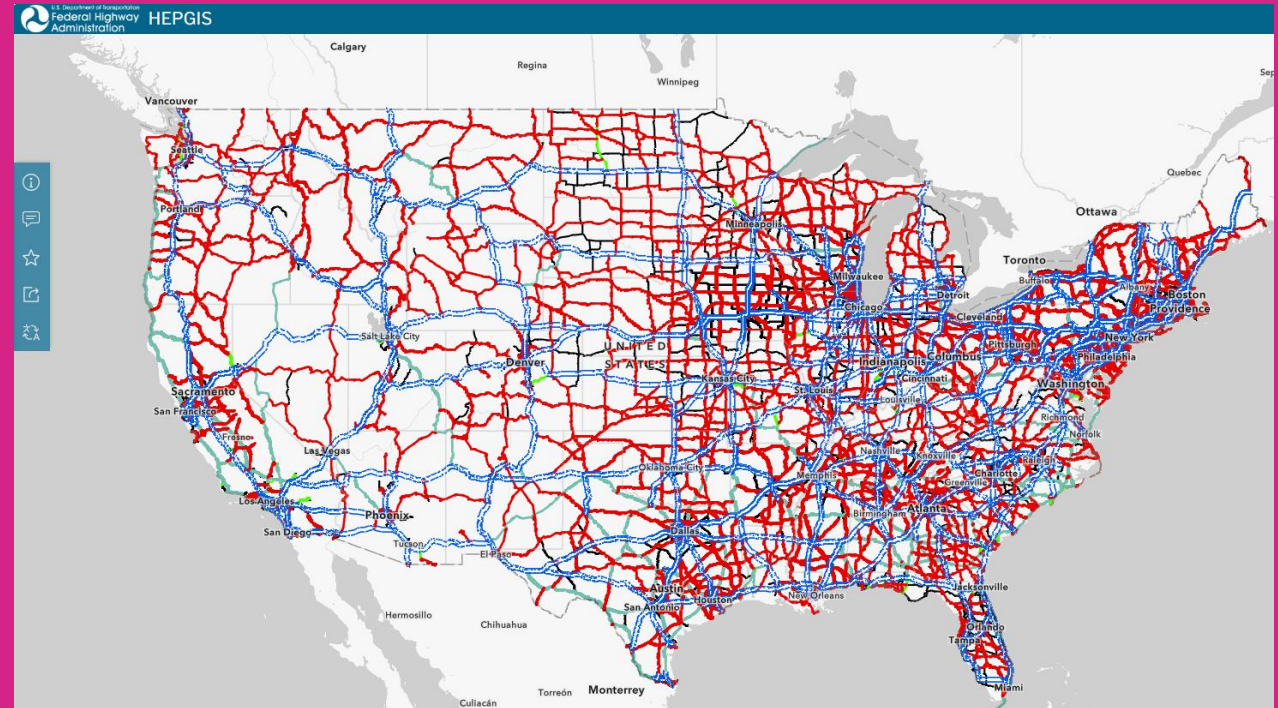


**This is NOT
inevitable**

Manchester
27 June 2026– Owen Espley

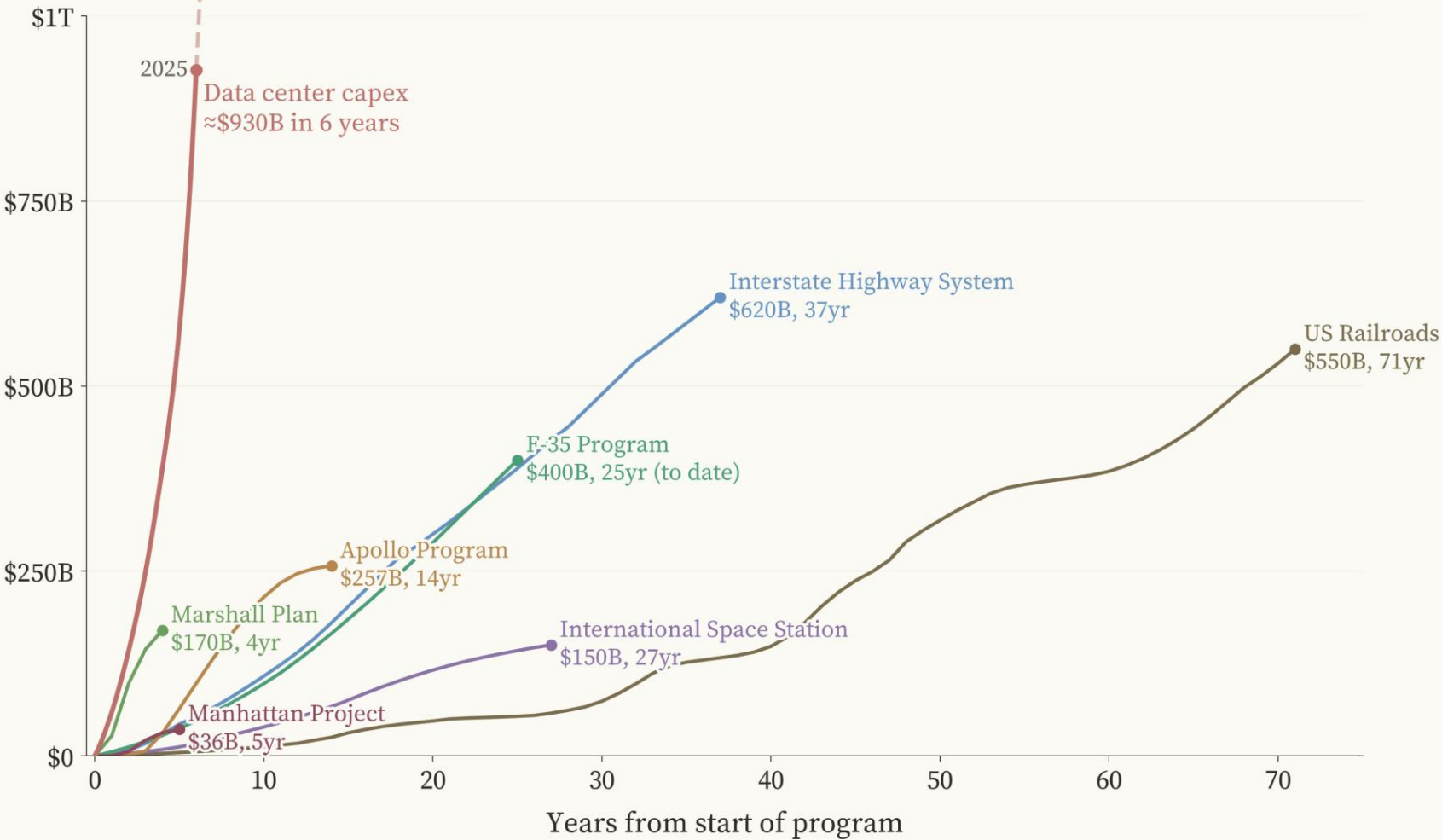
Spending 13 times as much in 5 years as the US highways systems which ran over budget and took more than 3 x decades to complete

Source: [AI dreams crash into stark \\$7 trln reality](#) | Reuters



Data centers vs. megaprojects

Inflation-adjusted costs, billions USD

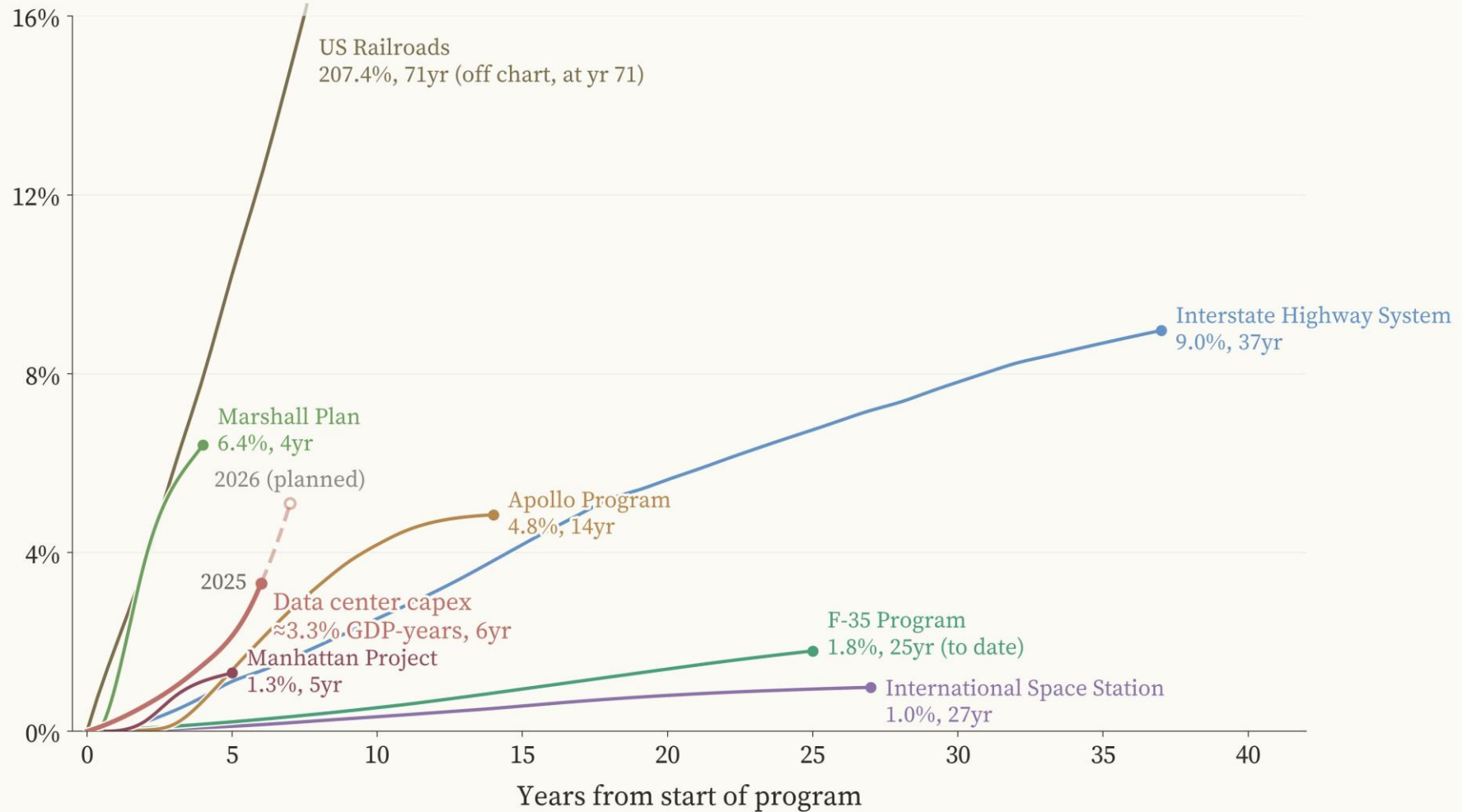


Sources: Company reports, Epoch AI · FHWA · NASA · CRS · GAO · Brookings

AI capex = estimated data-centre share of global reported capex at the big-5 US hyperscalers (Amazon, Microsoft, Alphabet, Meta, Oracle; Epoch AI + Platformonomics). Assuming DC share scales from ~55% in 2020 to ~80% by 2026. Excludes Chinese hyperscalers. All costs in 2024 dollars.

Data centers vs. megaprojects

Annual spending as % of US GDP, cumulated across program years



Sources: [Company reports](#), [Epoch AI](#) · [FHWA](#) · [NASA](#) · [CRS](#) · [GAO](#) · [Brookings](#)

Data center capex = estimated data-centre share of big-5 hyperscaler (AMZN, MSFT, GOOG, META, ORCL) global capex. DC share ≈55% (2020) → 80% (2026). Each year's spend ÷ that year's US real GDP (BEA + MeasuringWorth, 2024\$). AI is global vs. US-only GDP.



‘A typical AI-focused data centre consumes as much electricity as 100,000 households’

- International Energy Agency

Data centres used as much electricity in 2025 as the homes of, 1.3 billion people, the population of Sub-Saharan Africa, needs, for 2.6 years.

- United Nations University

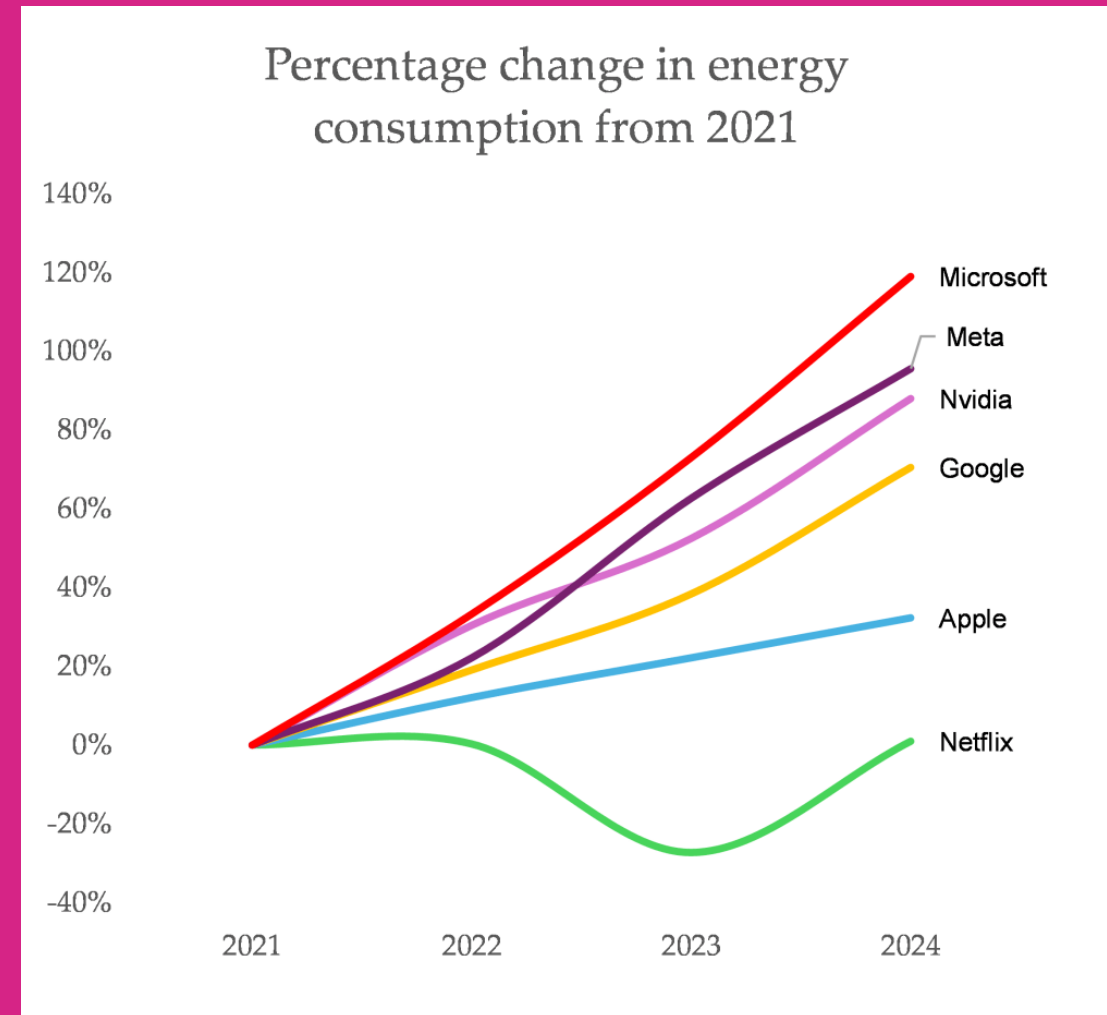
**+2.7m
tonnes
CO²**

**10 New
Data
Centres**

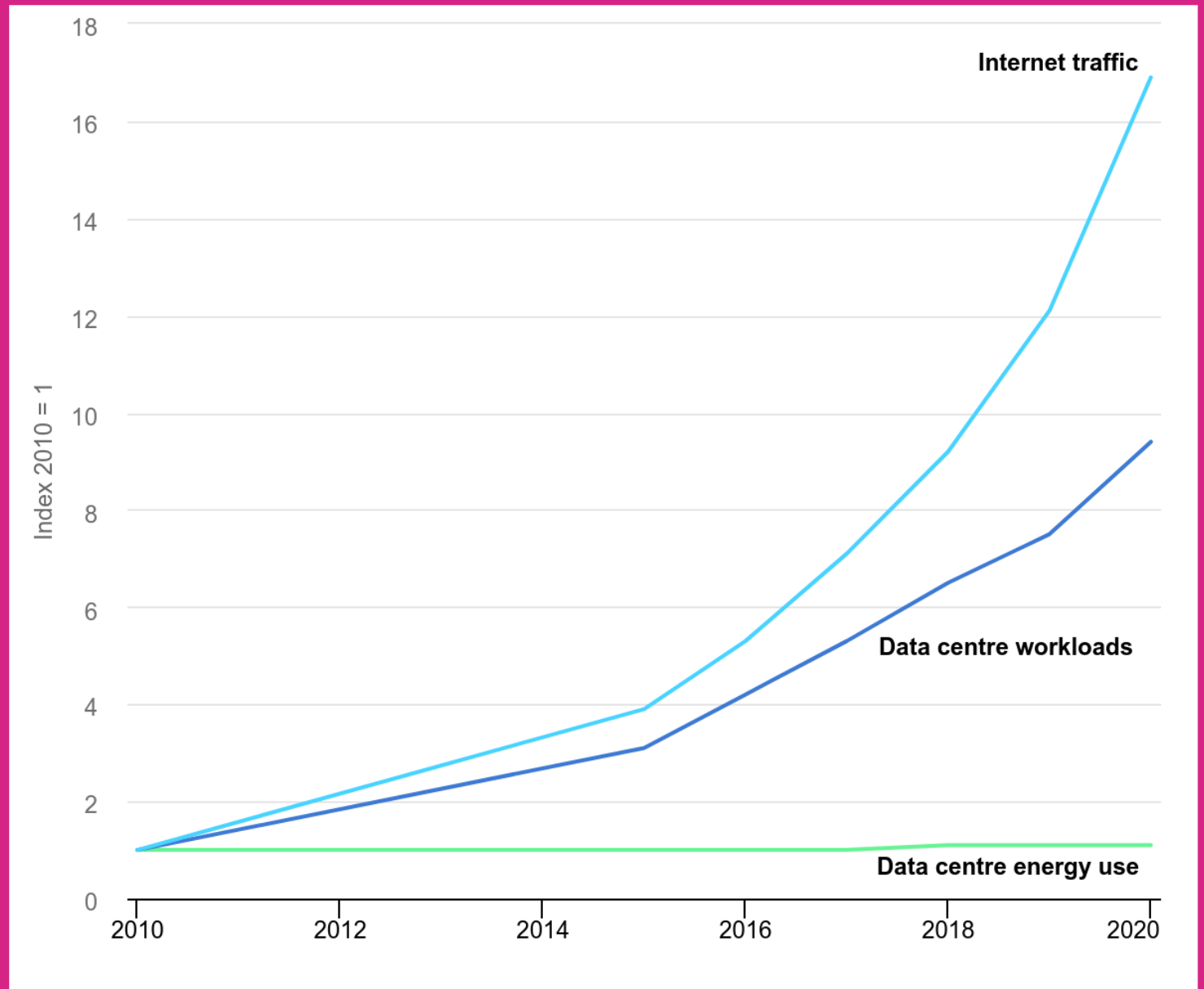
**Switch To
Electric
Cars**

**-2.9m
tonnes
CO²**

What about Netflix?



**Global trends in
internet traffic,
data centres
workloads and
data centre
energy use,
2010-2020
Source: IEA**



ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Projected energy consumption will be 13x higher for generative AI than traditional AI, in the year 2030

Traditional AI



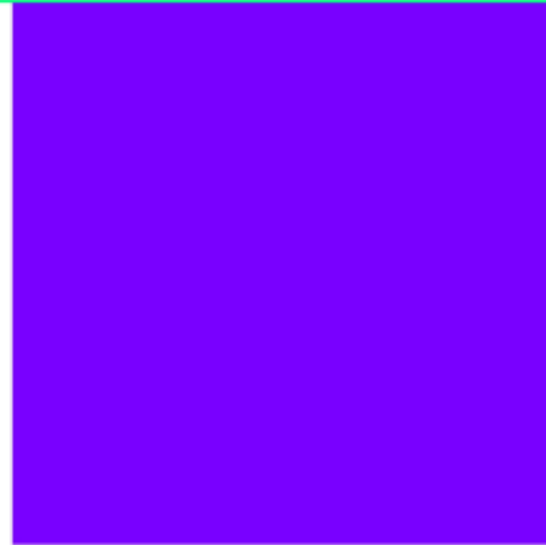
Consumer
generative AI



CLIMATE BENEFIT CLAIMS

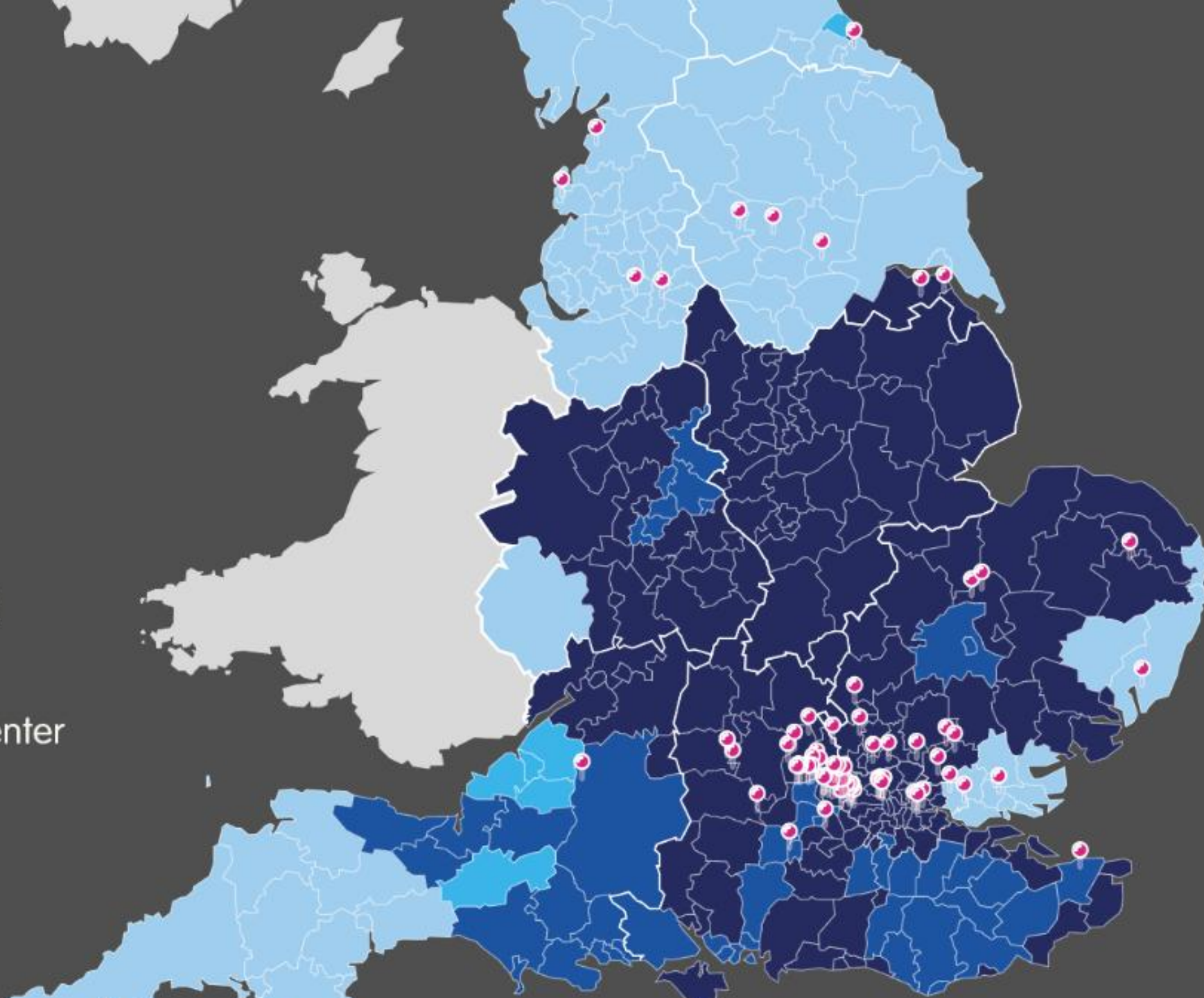
....but the claims of climate benefits centre almost exclusively on 'traditional' AI

Traditional AI



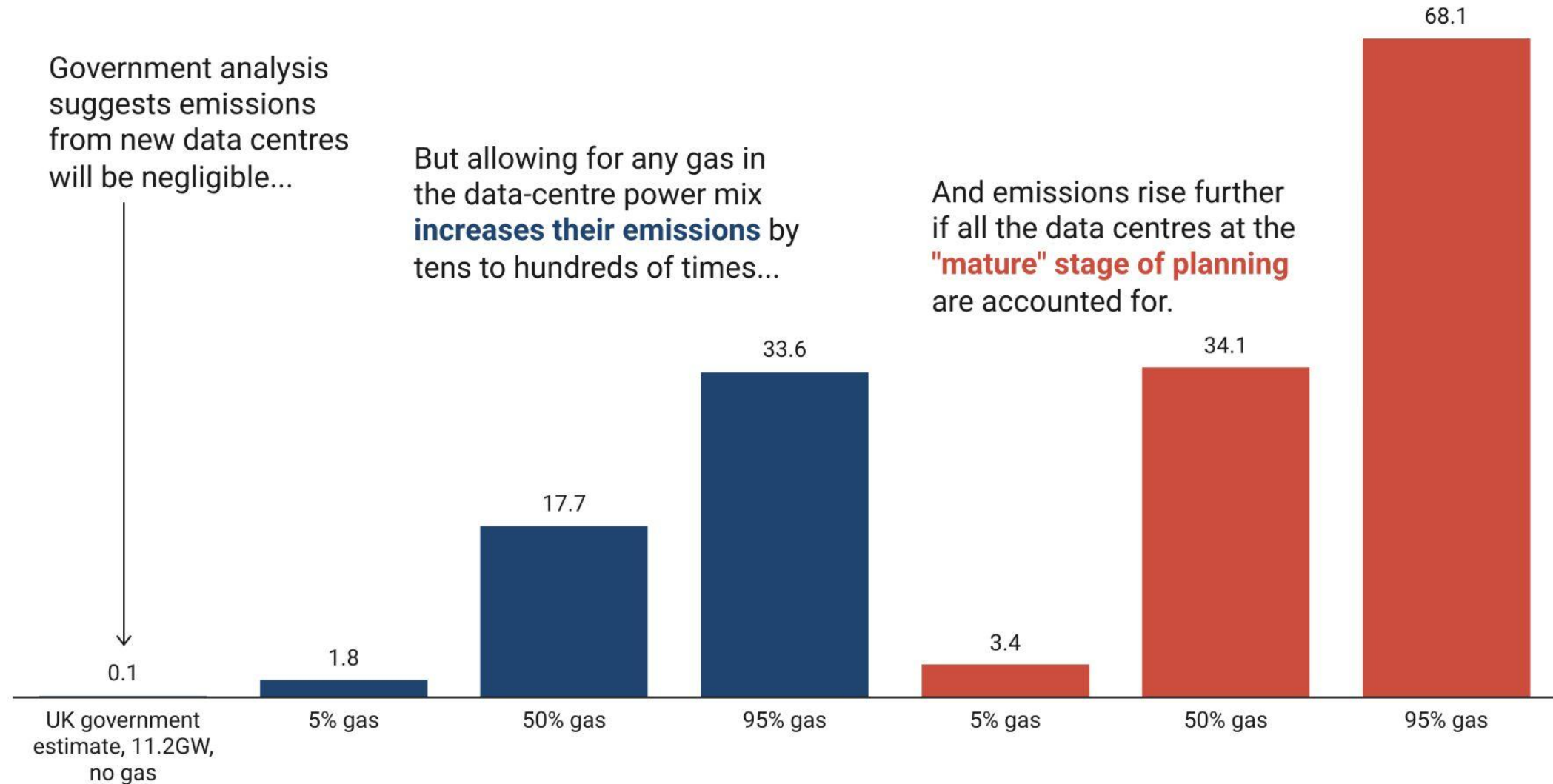
Consumer
generative AI





CO2 emissions from new data centres could be hundreds of times higher than government estimates suggest

Emissions from powering future UK data centres, MtCO2



Source: DSIT, Carbon Brief analysis

OUR LIVES. OUR PLANET.

The End
Thank-you!



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