

# Reducing your Carbon Footprint



## What is a carbon footprint?

"Carbon footprints" are the total amount of greenhouse gases generated by human actions.

Greenhouses gases (such as carbon dioxide) contribute to the "greenhouse effect", which is the process where molecules trap heat from the sun. This results in environmental change.

## How are carbon footprints distributed by income and country?

Sub-Saharan Africa



About **1.6** tons of CO<sub>2</sub>\*

Europe



About **10** tons of CO<sub>2</sub>\*

North America



About **20** tons of CO<sub>2</sub>\*

\*per person per year

The wealthiest 10% of North Americans → **68.8** tons of CO<sub>2</sub>\*

The middle 40% of North Americans → **21.3** tons of CO<sub>2</sub>\*

The poorest 50% of North Americans → **10.8** tons of CO<sub>2</sub>\*

## What actions can I take to reduce my carbon footprint?

### Larger effect

- Eating a vegan diet
- Avoiding long flights
- Using renewable energy
- Living car-free

### Moderate effect

- Eating organic food
- Eating a vegetarian diet
- Installing heat pumps

### Lower effect

- Buying fewer things
- Lowering room temperature
- Using energy efficient appliances
- Carpooling
- Recycling

## What are common misconceptions about carbon emissions and greenhouse gasses?

### Reducing waste vs. preventing environmental change

- Preventing environmental change is directly related to the greenhouse effect. Efforts to prevent environmental change focus on reducing the production and release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- Pollution and waste (ie. plastic in the oceans) do not directly cause global environmental change, although their reduction usually curbs the emission of greenhouse gases.
- The primary benefit of recycling is reducing waste. It does not have a large impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

### Air pollution vs. greenhouse gasses

- Not all air pollution is a greenhouse gas. There are many air molecules which harm human health but they do not trap heat from the sun and therefore do not contribute to global environmental change.



We would like to acknowledge the Stakeholder Action Board for their contributions and expertise.



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## Will my personal actions and choices be impactful?

Yes! Individual choices have the potential to reduce carbon footprints by 25%.

But environmental policy at all levels of government is also required to achieve significant, long-term reductions in greenhouse gasses.

## Why is collective action important?

Collective action refers to the collaborations between people to achieve a common objective. It can be used to implement social change and encourage corporations and governments to enact meaningful environmental policy.

## How can I engage in collective action for global environmental change?

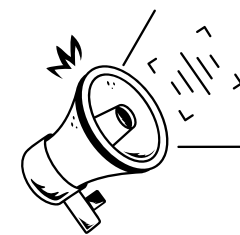
### ① Vote

Voting for environmentally-dedicated candidates at all levels of government increases the chances of impactful policy. Voting resource guides from environmental organizations can help inform your decisions. Research local candidates and referendums, as many environmental policies are enacted at the local level.



### ② Use your voice

Raise awareness on global environmental change and take part in conversations about this environment with your friends and family. Check out resources on environmental change by the Nature Conservancy to learn more.



### ③ Dedicate Time

Volunteer your time and skills to local efforts on environmental change. Support environmentally-oriented non-profits of all sizes by starting a local chapter, offering support in your neighborhood, or providing financial contributions.



Please see [http://mleead.umich.edu/Coec\\_Fact\\_Sheets.php](http://mleead.umich.edu/Coec_Fact_Sheets.php) for the citations included in this factsheet.

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