

POPULATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

More of us means more emissions, but due to extreme inequalities, there are vast differences in how much regions and individuals contribute to the climate crisis. In 2023, the average citizen of the United States had a carbon footprint 80 times larger than people in some of the poorest and fastest-growing countries in sub-Saharan Africa.



The wealthiest countries are responsible for most of the historical emissions that have created the climate crisis and therefore must lead on mitigation efforts, as well as lend financial assistance to the poorest countries, which are unfairly bearing the brunt of climate impacts. Nevertheless, ending global population growth through voluntary means is an important climate solution. For example, India still has low per capita emissions, yet it is the third largest national emitter, after China and the U.S.

Research by Project Drawdown found that slowing population growth by accelerating progress on family planning and education could cut emissions by 68.9 gigatons by mid-century, making this the third most effective available climate action to limit warming to 2°C (after reducing food waste and meat and dairy consumption). These empowering solutions also build prosperity and resilience, making them crucial climate change adaptation measures.



Learn more about population and climate change on our website!

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Sources: Global Carbon Atlas (accessed 2026), Project Drawdown (2022)



POPULATION AND NATURE

Biodiversity is disappearing so fast that scientists have declared a sixth mass extinction, driven by human activity. One million wild species are estimated to be at risk of disappearing for good. The main drivers are habitat destruction and species overexploitation, which are fueled by human population growth and unsustainable consumption.



Between 1970 and 2020, vertebrate wildlife populations plummeted by an average of 73%. During that time, our human population more than doubled, from 3.7 billion to 7.9 billion. Our population is now over 8 billion and still growing, which places enormous pressure on biodiversity and critical natural resources like fresh water, food sources, and timber. According to the Global Footprint Network, we are collectively already using resources 1.8 times faster than the Earth can regenerate them.



Agriculture, especially livestock farming, disproportionately contributes to soil degradation, unsustainable water use, climate emissions, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Already half of all habitable land on Earth is used for agriculture. Transforming our food systems and ending population growth and overconsumption are key to protecting nature and ensuring future generations can lead healthy, happy lives.



Learn more about population and biodiversity loss:

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Learn more about population and natural resources:

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Sources: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2019), World Wildlife Fund (2024), Global Footprint Network (2025), Our World in Data (2024)