Carbon-Footprints

What is a Carbon-Footprint?

"A measurement of the amount of carbon dioxide produced by the activities of a person, company, organization, etc."

Carbon Dioxide (CO2) is one of the notorious greenhouse gases that give rise to climate change. The United States has one of the highest average carbon footprints per person, leading with 16 tons over the global average of nearly 4 tons.
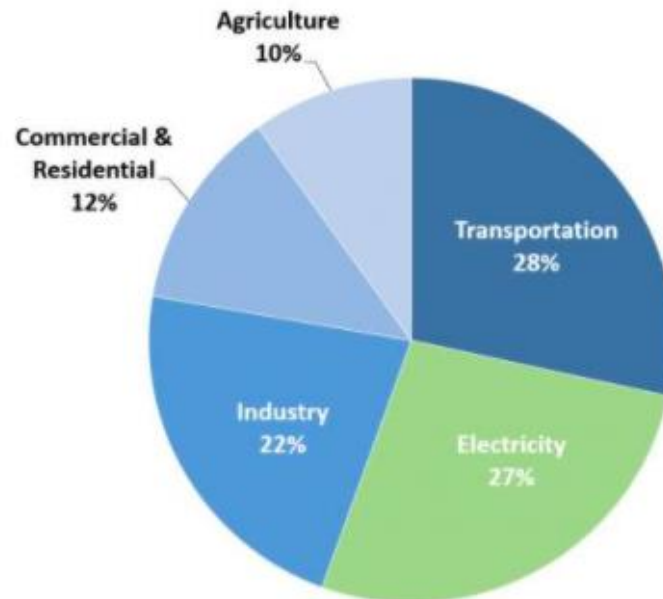
Why is it important?

With the issue of climate change, conservation, and the countdown for the world to achieve zero emissions, people are starting to build more sustainable lifestyles. Understanding the concept of carbon footprints is a crucial step towards achieving that lifestyle.

the carbon footprint

"The earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations." John Paul II

What causes them?

Total U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector in 2018

- Agriculture 10%
- Commercial & Residential 12%
- Transportation 28%
- Industry 22%
- Electricity 27%

Electricity
Burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas to produce electricity.

Transportation
Using vehicles such as cars, trucks, trains, ships, and airplanes to move both people and goods. Its emissions are caused by the combustion of petroleum-based products like gasoline.

Industry
Emissions caused by the production of the goods and raw materials we use every day, including fossil fuel burning and chemical reactions.

Commercial and Residential
Includes fossil fuel combustion for heating and cooking, organic waste disposal, and wastewater treatments for homes and businesses.
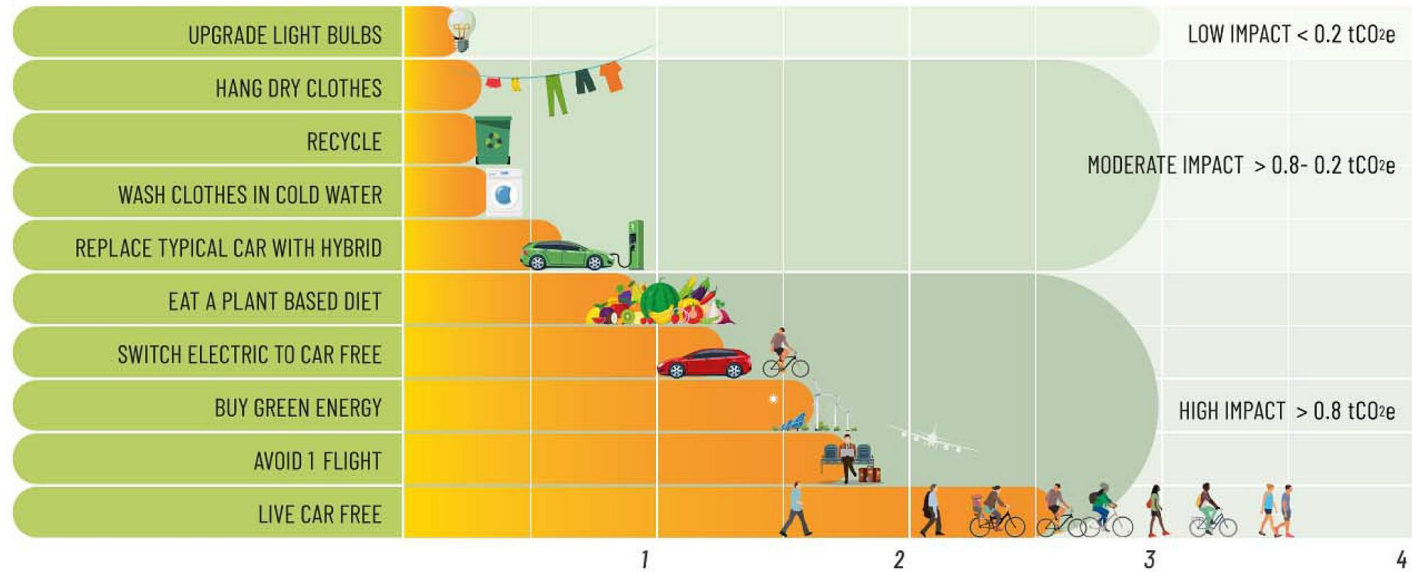
Agriculture
Emissions caused by the production of crop and livestock for food. Includes the use of fertilizers and irrigations systems, animal feed production, animal waste management, and enteric fermentation. Beef and cattle milk production are responsible for most of these emissions.

Your voice, vote, and money have power.

More than 71% of global emissions are caused by just 100 companies. Therefore, voters must pressure their governments to regulate these companies and push them towards zero-emissions. Meanwhile, consumers can pressure these companies with their wallets.

PERSONAL CHOICES TO REDUCE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
Average values for developed countries based on current emissions.

UPGRADE LIGHT BULBS	
HANG DRY CLOTHES	
RECYCLE	
WASH CLOTHES IN COLD WATER	
REPLACE TYPICAL CAR WITH HYBRID	
EAT A PLANT BASED DIET	
SWITCH ELECTRIC TO CAR FREE	
BUY GREEN ENERGY	
AVOID 1 FLIGHT	
LIVE CAR FREE	

LOW IMPACT < 0.2 tCO₂e

MODERATE IMPACT > 0.8- 0.2 tCO₂e

HIGH IMPACT > 0.8 tCO₂e

1   2   3   4

What can YOU do about it?

Upset about the Offset?

Do you expect me to change that much?

Any measures, big or small, can help. Although a dramatic change would go a long way, you don't need to do ALL these changes to make a significant impact. Also, what's important is to educate your family and friends, spread the word, start a conversation, see if they can make a change.

Less combustion
- Take one less airplane trip per year
- Reduce car travel by walking or biking when you can
- Switch to alternative fuels or electric cars

Make small changes in your diet
- Switch to a plant based or vegan diet
- Simply consume less meat and/or diary per week
- Meatless Mondays/ Dairy-Free Wednesdays/Vegan Thursdays

Watch what you buy
- Buy locally sourced products and In-season foods
- Farmers markets
- Avoid big chain stores
- If you can't avoid big-chain stores, support products and stores that commit towards making environmentally friendly changes and boycott those who refuse.
- Fun Fact: Aldi's has reduced their carbon footprint by 30% since 2012, while Walmart has committed to 100% renewable energy by the year 2030.

Minimize electricity use
- Turn off lights whenever possible, especially when not at home,
- Make more use of natural sunlight
- Turn off heater and AC when possible
- Switch to alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, or geothermic power.

Get Political
- Message your local governments and congressional representatives.
- Sign and support petitions that demand ecosystem protection, power plant regulation, and pollution regulation.
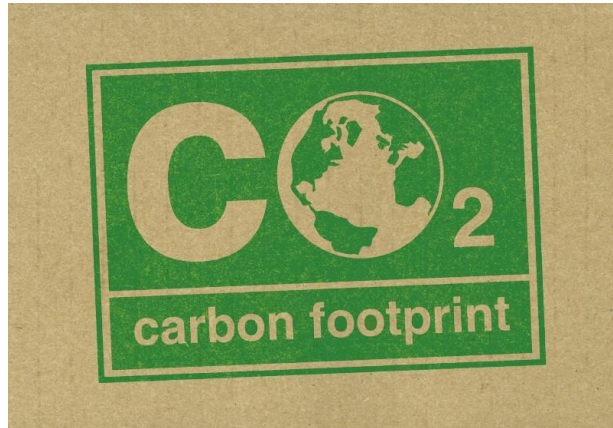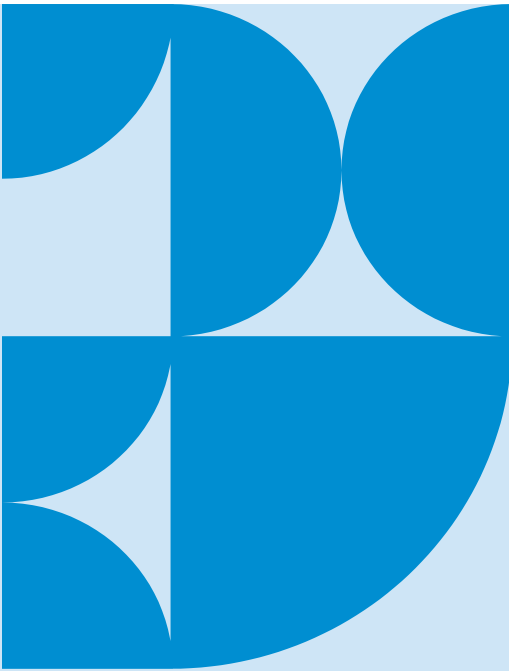- Vote
- Protest

Avoid WASTE this Holiday season!
- Buy local ingredients for Thanksgiving dinner
- Save leftovers or donate them to a local food bank/shelter
- Make DIY decorations and gifts with reusable or recyclable household items like boxes, glass jars, bottles, or cans.
- Buy reusable household cleaning and cooking items like rags, reusable bags, sheep-wool dryer balls, and bamboo dish scrubbers.

Calculate your Carbon Footprint

See where you stand as of now and see what steps you can take to reduce it:

https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/carbon-footprint-calculator/

Then, I challenge you to share this with your family and friends, make them aware of their own carbon footprint.

References and for more information visit:

https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions

https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/jul/10/100-fossil-fuel-companies-investors-responsible-71-global-emissions-cdp-study-climate-change

Is it worth it?

Many may wonder if any of their efforts has any real impact on the "eco-friendly" cause and if there is anything else that can be done. Calculating your Carbon Footprint is one way to start.