

Travel

Climate change impact and actions

Overview of topic

The transport sector is one of the fastest growing sources of global emissions.¹ The combined impact of commuting, work travel and recreational trips add up in terms of climate impact, with transportation accounting for 25% of global energy use² and the aviation industry individually being responsible for around 5% of global warming.³ While air travel is a significant source of emissions per passenger kilometer, short car trips are responsible for 75% of transport emissions.⁴

When we consider travel emissions we most often focus on the choice we make about the mode of travel we are

taking to go from point A to point B (train, plane, car, bike, etc.)—the “how” of travel. But consideration should also be given to the “why” of travel—why we are going the distances we are from point A to point B.

We can choose where we live relative to our place of work and the nearness to public transport. We can choose whether we live in walkable communities or ones that are vehicle dependent for almost all tasks. And in many places in the world, we can choose to be part of public processes supporting expanded public transport or improved infrastructure for biking and walking.

Did you know?

If the entire aviation sector were a country, it would be among the **top ten carbon polluting nations on the planet.**⁵



Personal transportation makes up **14% of humanity's carbon footprint.**⁶



- Using a bike instead of a car for short trips can reduce individual travel emissions by 75%.⁷
- A passenger taking a flight from New York to London and back emits more emissions than an average person in Paraguay over the course of an entire year.⁸
- Carpooling and using public transport reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants, plus decreases habitat loss and promotes biodiversity through reducing the need for more roads and parking space.

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Positive climate actions you can take



Today

Walk or ride a bike when traveling short distances.

When running errands, especially by car, try to combine trips to reduce frequency and duration. Offer to pick up items for neighbors to save additional trips.

Conduct virtual meetings, where possible.



Next month

Aim to fly economy and direct, where possible.

Purchase carbon-offsets that help cover the effect of your transportation footprint.



Over the coming year

Look into electric or hybrid options when purchasing or leasing your next car.

Opt for sustainable tourism—choose certified sustainable accommodations, tour operators, and destinations.

Before you buy or rent a new home, consider availability of public transport, and factor proximity to work or other frequent destinations into your decision making.

Participate in public planning processes that address public transport, walkability and bike lanes in your community.

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Additional Resources

Read

- [WWF | Green travel tips](#) (blog)
- [Sustainable Travel International | Offset calculator](#) (site)
- [National Geographic | What are carbon offsets? Here's why travelers are buying them](#) (article)
- [HSBC | A flying economy – the economic powerhouse above the clouds](#) (article)
- [Renew Economy | Complete switch to hydrogen fuel flights possible by 2050](#) (article)
- [Bloomberg NEF | Electric Vehicle Outlook 2020](#) (report)

Watch

- [Deloitte India | What is the biggest barrier to electric vehicle adoption](#) (video)

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¹ World Records Institute, "[Everything You Need to Know About the Fastest-Growing Source of Global Emissions: Transport](#)", October 16, 2019.

² WWF.

³ Transport & Environment, "[Flying and climate change](#)", accessed December 10, 2020.

⁴ WWF.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Global Footprint Network, "[What is your ecological footprint?](#)", accessed December 10, 2020.

⁷ Hannah Ritchie, "[Which form of transport has the smallest carbon footprint?](#)", Our World in Data, October 13, 2020.

⁸ WWF.

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