# Wealthiest 1% responsible for one-fifth of global warming, study reveals



A recent study has delivered a damning indictment of wealth inequality in relation to climate change, revealing that the world’s richest 1% are responsible for a staggering 20% of global warming. Conducted by researchers from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, the findings emphasise the extensive impact of affluent individuals on climate extremes and global temperature rises. With the wealthiest 10% of the population contributing to a whopping two-thirds of warming since 1990, the disparities between the lifestyles of the rich and the poor become alarmingly evident.

The figures paint a concerning picture: the top 10% are accountable for seven times more heat events than an average individual, while the top 1% emit a staggering 53 times their fair share of greenhouse gases. If every global citizen emitted as the poorest 50% do, humanity would have scarcely witnessed additional warming since 1990. Yet, the report warns that if everyone mimicked the consumption habits of the wealthiest 10%, the world could face a catastrophic temperature increase of 2.9°C over the next three decades—risking devastating impacts on climate stability.

This research highlights an unsettling dynamic whereby emissions from affluent populations in high-income countries, particularly the U.S. and China, disproportionately affect vulnerable regions across the globe. The situation is particularly dire for the Amazon rainforest, Southeast Asia, and parts of Africa, where emissions from the wealthy are linked to numerous climate disasters, including heat waves and droughts. Disturbingly, the study reports that wealthy individuals in the U.S. contribute to about 1.3 additional centennial heat events annually across the globe.

The implications for climate justice are stark. The burden of climate change does not fall equally, as poorer nations with minimal historical emissions are experiencing some of the most severe consequences. Regions historically disenfranchised by wealth inequality face climate disasters with inadequate resources for adaptation and resilience. Speaking to these inequities, Oxfam reports that the richest 1% produced as much carbon pollution as the poorest two-thirds combined, indicating a desperate need for progressive climate policies that address both environmental and social inequalities.

Activist movements have taken note, staging protests that highlight the unsustainable practices of the ultra-rich—such as the use of private jets and superyachts—which contribute disproportionately to carbon emissions. Recent estimates suggest that emissions from private air travel for the wealthy surged dramatically, with private jets accounting for a significant increase in emissions just over recent years. The idea behind these protests is to draw public attention to the substantial carbon footprints associated with opulent lifestyles, underscoring the disparity between luxury consumption and its environmental toll.

Further, prominent voices, including Cambridge economist Esther Duflo, have argued for strategies like compensating impoverished communities and aiding their adaptation efforts. There is a growing consensus that addressing extreme wealth inequality could be a crucial component in mitigating climate change. Policy measures, such as imposing minimum taxes on large global corporations and high-net-worth individuals, could redirect funds toward climate-friendly investments and vulnerable communities.

As extreme weather patterns continue to escalate, the need for broad-based action to combat climate change has never been more urgent. The findings summarised in the study serve as a rallying cry for both climate justice advocates and policymakers worldwide, pushing for robust strategies to bridge the gap between those responsible for emissions and those who suffer the consequences. The evidence is clear: combating climate change requires not only global cooperation but a keen awareness of the addictive cycle of wealth, consumption, and environmental degradation.

In understanding climate change as increasingly driven by the affluent, it becomes imperative to challenge the status quo and advocate for accountability among the world's wealthiest. Ultimately, climate change is not merely an issue of national or corporate responsibility; it is intrinsically linked to the choices of individuals participating in extreme forms of consumption that create dire consequences for communities across the globe.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 9
2. Paragraph 3
3. Paragraph 3
4. Paragraph 6
5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 7
7. Paragraph 8

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://studyfinds.org/extreme-weather-climate-change-wealthy/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/richest-1-emit-much-planet-heating-pollution-two-thirds-humanity> - An Oxfam report reveals that in 2019, the richest 1% of the global population produced as much carbon pollution as the poorest two-thirds combined. This group's emissions are projected to cause 1.3 million excess deaths due to heat between 2020 and 2030. The report emphasizes the need for progressive climate policies, such as taxing the super-rich, to address both climate change and inequality.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/nov/20/first-thing-richest-1-account-for-more-carbon-emissions-than-poorest-66> - A report by Oxfam highlights that the wealthiest 1% of the global population are responsible for 16% of CO₂ emissions, equating to more than a million excess deaths due to heat. The report underscores the disproportionate impact of the 'polluter elite' and calls for progressive climate policies to address this inequality.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/948fdfd4a377a633cedb359d05e3541c> - Climate activists have initiated protests targeting the ultra-wealthy's high-emission lifestyles, including superyachts, private jets, and golf courses. Incidents include spray painting a $300 million yacht in Spain and disrupting a private jet sales fair in Switzerland. The activists aim to highlight the significant carbon footprints associated with luxury lifestyles, as the wealthiest 1% are predicted to account for 16% of emissions by 2030.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/0a2d1d2cd81906381953346bfdb879e8> - A study published in 'Communications Earth & Environment' reports that carbon pollution from private jets has significantly increased over the last five years. In 2023, 17.2 million tons of CO₂ were emitted by the super-wealthy flying in private jets, equating to the annual emissions of 67 million Tanzanians. Despite representing only 1.8% of aviation emissions, private jets saw a 46% rise from 2019 to 2023.
6. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/04/18/esther-duflo-we-must-compensate-the-world-s-poorest-citizens-and-help-them-adapt-to-climate-change_6668770_23.html> - Esther Duflo argues for compensating the world's poorest citizens and helping them adapt to climate change. The poorest countries, often in hotter climates, are facing deadly temperature increases, while wealthier individuals and nations bear more responsibility for emissions. Duflo proposes a G20 initiative to secure long-term funds, with solutions including a minimum tax on large multinationals and a 2% annual tax on the world's wealthiest billionaires.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/f8a3030b-ff86-4903-820f-c7ff32df5826> - The commentary highlights the urgent need for climate action, underscored by recent data illustrating Europe's climate challenges, such as extreme heatwaves, marine heatwaves, and severe flooding in 2023. This data, from the latest European State of the Climate report, showcases the rising temperatures, especially in Europe, which faces accelerating climate impacts. The report warns that by 2050, global economic losses due to climate change could reach an estimated $38 trillion annually, affecting infrastructure, agriculture, and productivity.