# Study reveals men generate 26 per cent more carbon emissions than women due to diet and transport choices



Research from the London School of Economics and the Institute of Polytechnique de Paris has unveiled a significant disparity in carbon emissions between men and women, attributing this gap primarily to lifestyle choices in food and transportation. The study surveyed over 15,000 individuals, revealing that men generate, on average, 26 per cent more climate-heating emissions than women, even after accounting for factors like income, employment, and household size. Notably, an 18 per cent difference persists despite these adjustments.

The research highlights that men's consumption of red meat and reliance on cars are the two largest contributing factors to their higher emissions. Specifically, red meat comprises only 13 per cent of the average individual’s food footprint yet accounts for an astonishing 70 per cent of the emissions differential between genders. Additionally, men's tendency to drive alone in more polluting vehicles underlines the entire gap in transport emissions. This is particularly relevant as transport and food are acknowledged as two of the most carbon-intensive sectors.

Interestingly, emissions from air travel are fairly equal across genders, suggesting that not all high-carbon behaviours are influenced by gender in the same manner. While it is true that men generally consume more calories and travel longer distances, the study's findings indicate that these factors do not fully explain the emissions gap. Even among those with similar income levels, men consistently display higher-emitting habits concerning diet and travel.

Among singles, the environmental impact of dietary choices is even more pronounced, with single men showing a wider food-related emissions gap compared to their female counterparts. In couples, this trend flips, as shared meals tend to elevate women's dietary emissions while commuting reinforces the gap.

These results resonate with a broader body of research highlighting societal norms linking masculinity with high-emission products. Studies show that red meat and cars are culturally significant to male identity, which may influence men's reluctance to alter their consumption habits, particularly when doing so might incur perceived personal costs. Historically, women in high-income countries have been shown to adopt more climate-friendly behaviours and support environmental policies to a greater extent than men. However, it’s crucial to note that this concern for the climate may also influence behavioural choices, creating a feedback loop of values and priorities.

The study challenges the notion that economic status is the predominant variable in determining emissions, as the disparity between men and women mirrors the gaps observed between high-income and low-income groups in comparable sectors. This revelation prompts necessary considerations for climate policy, suggesting that initiatives such as carbon taxes should take into account the disproportionate impact on men who may associate high-emission activities with identity and status.

If men in France adopted the dietary and transportation habits of their female counterparts without changing their consumption volume or travel distances, it is estimated that emissions could drop by over 13 million tonnes of CO2 each year—substantially more than the reduction anticipated under France’s proposed 2030 climate strategies.

Despite producing more emissions, it is significantly women who face the harshest consequences of climate change, particularly in lower-income nations. This demographic often lacks essential resources, has restricted land rights, and plays a limited role in decision-making during crises. Reports from the United Nations indicate that women and children are disproportionately affected in climate-related disasters, with women making up about 70 per cent of those displaced by such events—a reality underscored by factors such as caregiving roles and limited mobility.

In parallel, another study highlighted the global trend for men to consume more meat than women, particularly in developed, gender-equal societies, suggesting deeper cultural and evolutionary roots behind dietary choices. With animal-based products accounting for 20 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, targeting men's meat consumption could yield significant environmental benefits.

Furthermore, climate action must consider gender equality not just as a moral obligation but as an operational necessity for achieving long-term sustainability. Initiatives that enhance women's roles in agriculture and climate adaptation have been shown to bolster food security and resilience against climate impacts. For instance, empowering female farmers through access to resources and decision-making can drive productivity enhancements and promote environmental stewardship.

Gender-responsive approaches to climate policy and personal behaviour change could thus play a vital role in mitigating the effects of climate change while promoting equity and justice in its management.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraph 1, 2
3. Paragraph 2
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraph 4
6. Paragraph 4, 5
7. Paragraph 4, 5

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/climate-change-carbon-emissions-men-women-b2751374.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/b8278955cfd8caad6007f68677c6e8a6> - A study published in Scientific Reports revealed that men globally consume more meat than women, a trend that intensifies in more developed and gender-equal countries. The research, surveying over 28,000 people across 23 nations, linked dietary choices with social and financial freedoms, emphasizing men's higher meat consumption and women's environmental concerns. The study suggests that reducing meat intake among men could significantly impact planetary health, as animal-based products contribute to 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The gender-based dietary differences could be rooted in evolutionary roles, cultural norms, and personal identities. While societal pressures can drive men's meat consumption, change remains challenging.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/18120967-5639-41d8-8dd0-31e735648661> - This essay underscores the urgent need for individual actions to combat climate change, as emphasized by a 2022 UN report. Key areas for personal impact are food consumption, transportation, and clothing. Reducing meat intake, especially beef, and opting for less carbon-intensive meats like chicken can significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions. Buying local and Fairtrade foods, and minimizing food waste are also crucial. Utilizing public transportation, limiting air travel, and choosing local vacations can greatly cut emissions from transportation. In fashion, reducing consumption, buying second-hand or renting clothes, and choosing recycled materials can substantially diminish the carbon footprint. The essay highlights that through small yet significant lifestyle changes, individuals can substantially contribute to environmental sustainability.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/feed-warming-world-we-must-also-serve-up-gender-equality-2025-03-25/> - The document underscores the crucial role of gender equality in achieving climate-resilient and food-secure futures. As countries prepare their climate strategies for COP30 in Brazil, it is evident that women, who make up nearly half of the agricultural workforce, face significant disparities that hinder their contribution to climate adaptation and food security. Female-headed households experience higher income losses due to climate impacts compared to male-headed ones, and gender considerations remain underrepresented in climate policies. Progress has been made through increased commitments by development agencies, but recent reductions in overseas assistance from key countries threaten to stall advancements. Examples from Tanzania and Bangladesh highlight the potential improvements in agricultural productivity and climate resilience when women receive adequate support and resources. Investing in women's access to climate finance and decision-making is fundamental, potentially increasing productivity by up to 30% and reducing global hunger. The document calls for gender-responsive agricultural research and innovation and emphasizes maintaining the momentum for gender equality in climate strategies for sustainable food systems.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/land-use-biodiversity/comment-women-are-custodians-nature-key-improving-integrity-carbon-markets-2024-12-02/> - Improving the integrity of carbon markets is essential to addressing climate change, with nature-based solutions offering significant potential. However, efforts so far have unlocked just a fraction of this potential. A key element missing from discussions on enhancing these markets is the critical role of women. Women, particularly in developing countries, are vital to environmental conservation and are disproportionately affected by climate change. Countries with greater female governmental representation tend to adopt more robust environmental policies. In Costa Rica, gender-inclusive strategies, including partnerships with Indigenous communities, demonstrate the benefits of involving women in carbon market initiatives. The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market is moving towards incorporating gender equality into its standards. Broader adoption of these inclusive practices can strengthen community resilience and ensure that carbon projects also promote social equity, aligning with the goals of the Paris Agreement.
6. <https://apnews.com/article/3980deda0d27c16258c1e79bbf4e1481> - A recent study published in Nature Climate Change warns that greenhouse gas emissions from current food production and consumption patterns could add nearly 1 degree of warming to Earth's climate by 2100. This would push global temperatures beyond the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit targeted by the Paris climate agreement, approaching the 2 degrees Celsius threshold. The study highlights that significant emissions come from meat, dairy, and rice production, with meat contributing the most at 33%. These foods emit large amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Researchers stress that reducing methane emissions is crucial for mitigating climate change, as it can have a quick positive impact. Proposed measures include eating less meat, adopting better farming practices, and recycling food waste. However, changing consumer and producer behaviors poses a significant challenge. The study underscores that addressing food sector emissions is essential for meeting global climate targets.
7. <https://apnews.com/article/6ab3cc6bd9d372dcec4693b366e3b35c> - The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has reported that women running farms and rural households in impoverished areas face greater adversity from climate change and endure discrimination when seeking alternative income sources during crises. According to the FAO's report, "The Unjust Climate," female-headed households lose an average of 8% more income during heatwaves and 3% more during floods compared to male-headed ones. This results in significant financial losses, amounting to an annual total of $37 billion and $16 billion due to heat stress and floods, respectively, in poor countries. The FAO surveyed 100,000 rural households in 24 countries, examining 70 years of climate data. The report highlights the neglect of rural women's specific vulnerabilities in government climate adaptation plans and calls for targeted strategies to address disparities. FAO's director general, Qu Dongyu, emphasized the need for greater financial resources and policy attention to inclusivity and resilience in global climate measures.