



**ecojudaism**  
OUR FAITH IN THE PLANET

## Climate justice: Who is responsible for and who is impacted by the climate crisis?

By World Jewish Relief



### Q: Who is responsible for emissions?

- Total greenhouse gas emissions vary greatly between different countries. Generally, the largest emitters are the wealthier nations that industrialised earlier such as Europe, North America and Australia, or those that have undergone rapid industrial expansion in recent years, such as China and India.
- Total cumulative CO2 emissions from 1750 to 2019, in tonnes:
- However, there are different metrics for comparing which countries bear greater responsibility: total cumulative historical emissions like above, total annual emissions now, annual emissions per person, annual emissions in relation to economic growth.
- Governments typically argue that they should be permitted to have higher emissions if they have a larger population, or if they have not yet benefited from the economic growth that wealthier nations have gained from various emission producing activities.
- We can also compare the responsibility of different sectors. Greenhouse gas emissions come mostly from: energy (73%), agriculture (18%), industry (5%), waste (3%).
- Finally, we can see which of our own lifestyle choices are contributing to the problem. For example, driving high emission vehicles, consuming meat, using electronic goods, and failing to recycle, are all choices that contribute to the four highest emission sectors.

### Q: Which people are most impacted by the climate crisis?

- The people that will suffer the most as a result of the climate crisis are not those who are most responsible for the emissions that have caused it. Generally, the most affected people can be split into two groups:

- People who live in areas that will be highly affected:
- Small islands that will be devastated by sea level rise, e.g. in the Pacific
- Arid areas (particularly where people are dependent on agriculture)
- Low lying areas near coasts or flood plains
- Cities in hot countries (due to risk of extreme heatwaves with limited infrastructure)
- People who are more vulnerable to disruptions to livelihoods and health:
- People living in poverty
- Marginalized people, e.g. religious or ethnic minorities, indigenous populations
- Women and girls, people with disabilities, older people

### **Q: Are those that have caused greenhouse gas emissions taking responsibility for the climate crisis?**

- By the 1960s, warming was already being observed, and linked to emissions. Over the next few decades, projections about how the climate would change became more certain. However, the most responsible countries and sectors have been too slow to reduce their emissions.
- Politicians and industries have deliberately promoted climate change scepticism, to prevent the public from calling upon them to change and to protect their profitability.
- On the other hand, environmental campaigns and international diplomacy have been used to attempt to limit emissions. Recent examples include the Schools Strike for Climate, and
- and the Paris Agreement, where countries committed to reducing emissions.
- Watch out for COP-26, which is coming up in November. This is the latest annual meeting of governments to negotiate on national emission reduction targets, and discuss 'Loss and Damage', by which countries most affected by the climate crisis aim to quantify how much their economies have been damaged. This will be really important moving forward as governments debate how much support the wealthier nations now owe to the affected countries.

### **If you would like to read more:**

Databases on greenhouse gas emissions by country

<https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

<http://www.globalcarbonatlas.org/en/CO2-emissions>