



EMBARGOED FOR NOVEMBER 24, 2009

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National Footprint Accounts 2009
Key Findings and Graphs

Every year, Global Footprint Network calculates the Ecological Footprint of more than 100 countries and humanity as a whole as an indicator of **how much nature we have, how much we use and who uses what.**

Our 2009 numbers, to be released Tuesday, Nov. 24, reveal a growing gap between the rate of human demand on ecological services and the rate at which those resources can be generated. They also reflect vast differences between those countries with the highest Ecological Footprint and those with the lowest. Our numbers are based upon 2006 data, the most recent year for which source data are available.

Below are some key findings:

How Much We Have and How Much We Use

The Ecological Footprint measures the amount of land and sea area it takes to produce the resources a population consumes and absorb its CO₂ emissions – and compares that with biocapacity, or the amount of resources the earth's ecosystems can generate.

In 2006, the amount of biocapacity available per person was 1.8 gha. The average Ecological Footprint per person was 2.6 gha.

- **Humanity now uses the resources of almost one and a half planets.**
- We are demanding nature's services—using resources and creating CO₂ emissions—at a rate 47 percent faster than what nature regenerate and reabsorb. That means it takes the Earth just under 18 months to produce the ecological services humanity needs in one year.
- Humanity's Ecological Footprint grew almost 2 percent from 2005 to 2006, due to both rising population and per capita consumption. Humanity's Footprint grew 22 percent from the decade before.
- At the same time human demand has been escalating, biocapacity -- the amount of resources nature can produce -- has not increased, and may actually have declined very slightly in recent years. This fall is, in part, a direct result of ecological overshoot and its effects in terms of climate change, flooding, deforestation and desertification.

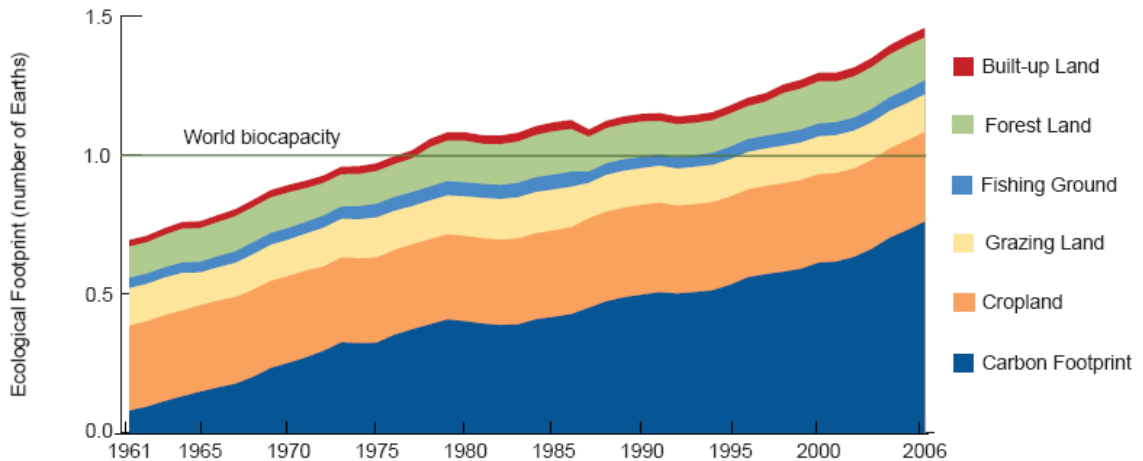


Figure x. Humanity's Ecological Footprint, 1961-2006

Source: Global Footprint Network, National Footprint Accounts, 2009 Edition.

Who Uses What: Ecological Footprint Comparisons

Globally, it would take one and a half planets to sustainably produce all the resources we consume and absorb our carbon dioxide emissions. But some countries' level of ecological demand is much greater than world average, and some is much smaller.

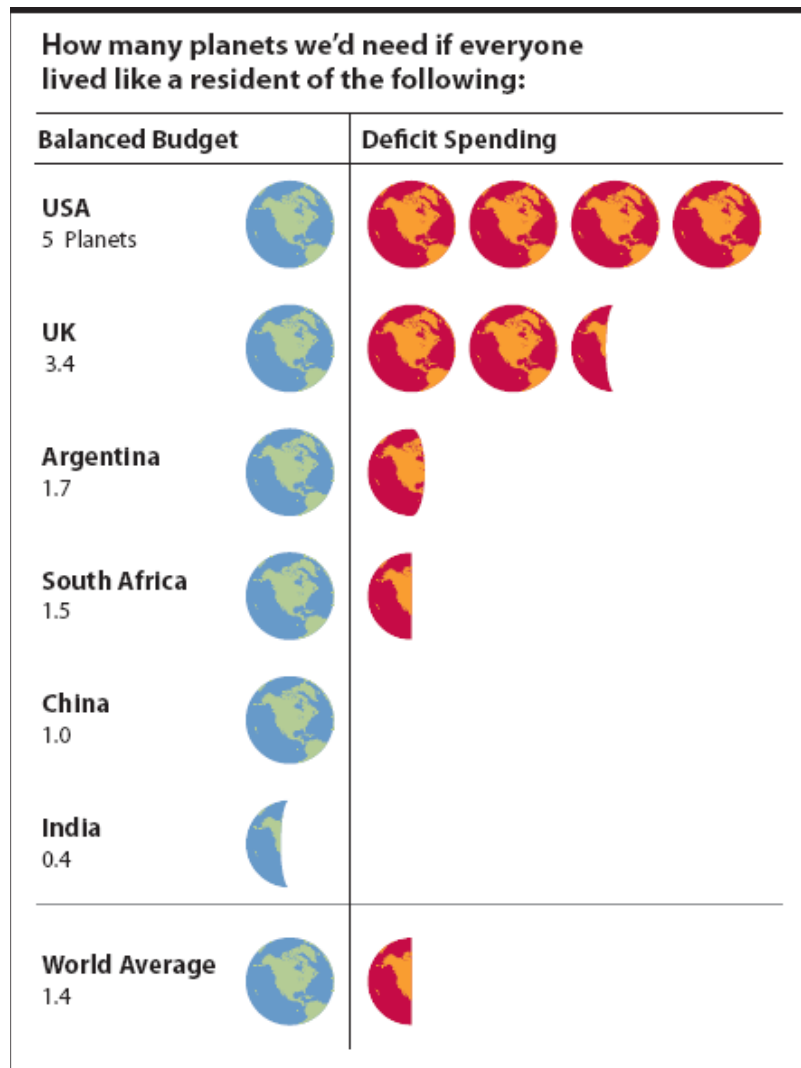
- The United Arab Emirates has the highest Ecological Footprint per capita. The Emirates adopted a national Ecological Footprint Initiative in 2007 and has been working to reduce its Footprint. Along with investing heavily in renewable energy and other sustainability initiatives, UAE researchers are working with Global Footprint Network to identify policies that could significantly cut the country's per capita Footprint.
- The average American has an ecological Footprint of 9.0 global hectares (23 acres) – the size of 17½ American football fields. If everyone on Earth lived like an American, we would require the resources of five planets.
- The average European has a Footprint of 4.5 global hectares, half that of the average American, but still well above both the world average and what is sustainably available per person.
- On the other end of the scale are Malawi, Haiti, Nepal, and Bangladesh, with Footprints of about half a global hectare (1.25 acres), in most cases too small to provide for basic food, shelter and sanitation.

[Click here for a bar graph of Ecological Footprints by Nation](#)

Countries with the highest Ecological Footprint per capita

(in global hectares/acres – hectares/acres with world-average productivity)

United Arab Emirates	10.3 gha (26 global acres)
Qatar	9.7 gha (24 global acres)
United States of America	9.0 gha (22.5 global acres)
Ireland	8.2 gha (20.5 global acres)
Kuwait	7.9 gha (19.8 global acres)
New Zealand	7.6 gha (19 global acres)
Denmark	7.2 gha (18 global acres)
Estonia	6.4 gha (16 global acres)
United Kingdom	6.1 gha (15.3 global acres)
Canada	5.8 gha (14.5 global acres)



Source: InfoGrafik

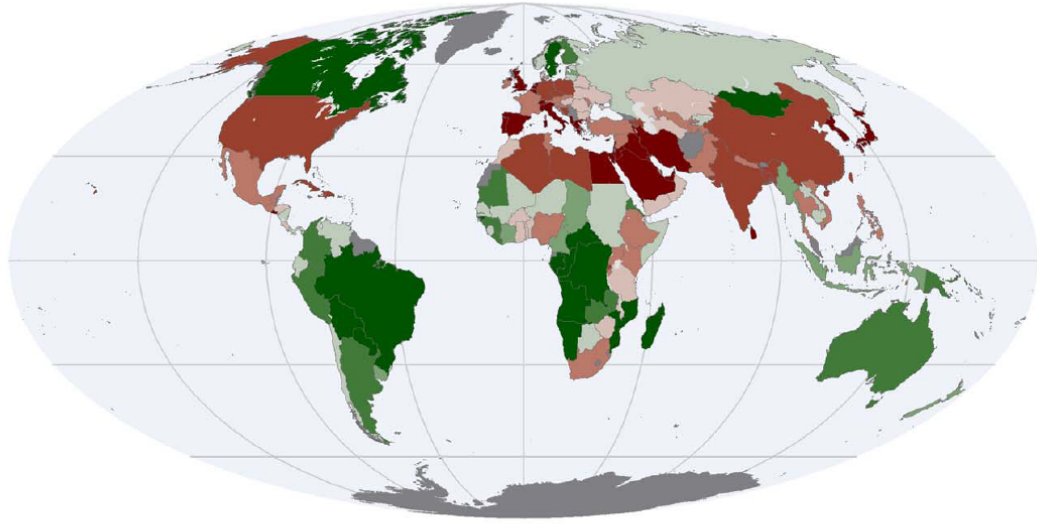
Ecological Debtors and Creditors

We can think of countries that have more biocapacity than they use as ecological creditors, and those that use more biocapacity than they have as ecological debtors.

Since 1961, the number of countries with deficits – and the size of those deficits – has multiplied, while the size of reserves has shrunk. (see maps below.)

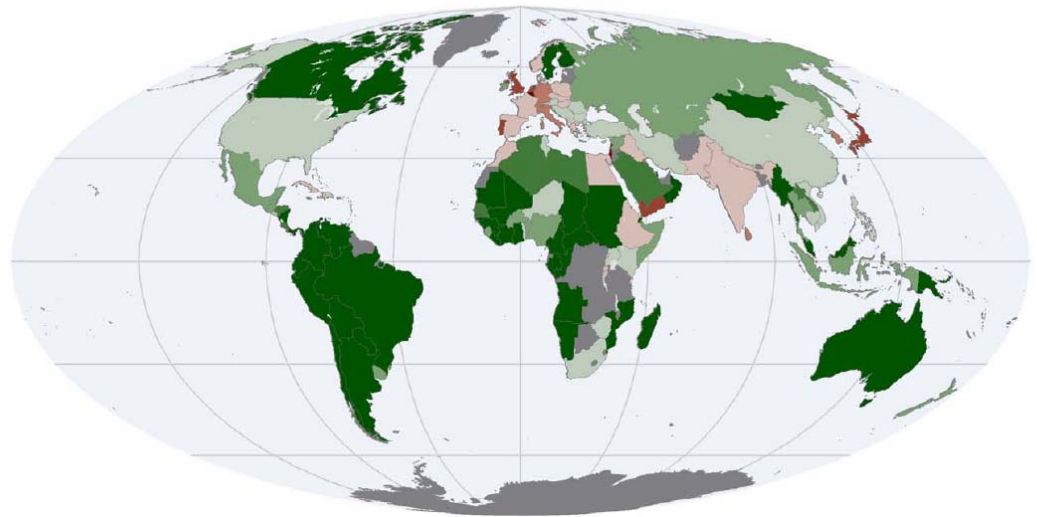
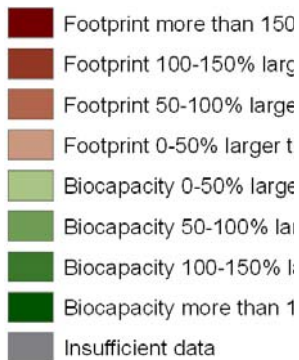
- The U.S. now has a total Ecological Footprint of more than 100 percent greater than biocapacity. By comparison, in 1961, the U.S. had an ecological surplus, with biocapacity 42 percent larger than its Ecological Footprint. China and India have seen similar reversals.
- More than 80 percent of the world's people now live in countries that use more biocapacity than the ecosystems within their borders can produce.

Percent of Earth's Biocapacity Used: 144%

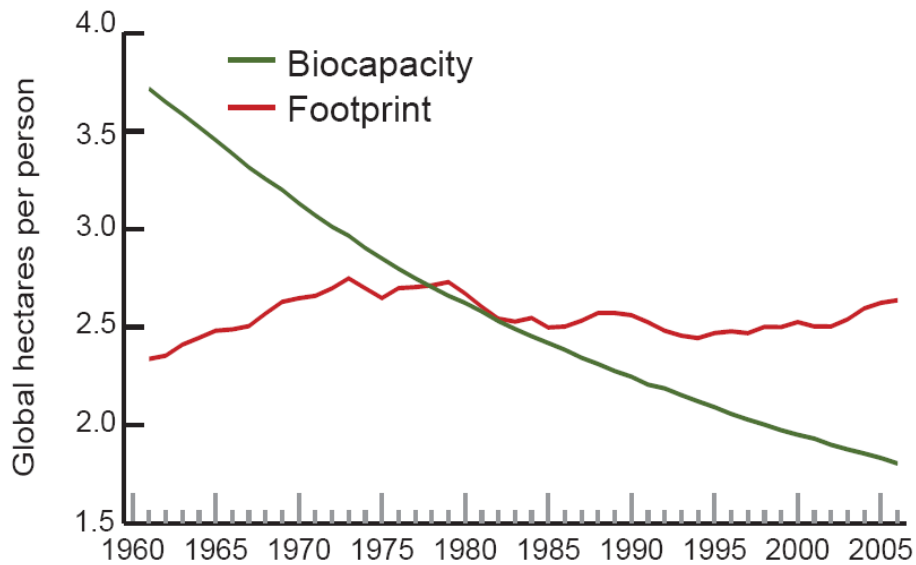


2006

Percent of Earth's Biocapacity Used: 62%



1961



Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity per capita, 1961-2006

Source: Global Footprint Network, National Footprint Accounts, 2009 Edition.

Taking Action: What Can We Do To Change the Curve?

This new data comes just as world leaders have acknowledged that a global climate deal at Copenhagen is out of reach this year. And while many are disappointed, the good news is that no matter what happens on the international stage, many of the governments we work with are already beginning to act.

Current ecological trends suggest that ecological services can only become more costly and subject to disruption. Thus it is in every nation's interest to act now and act boldly to succeed in a resource-constrained world. That is why Global Footprint Network is working with government and opinion leaders around the globe to see the opportunities in acting now to reduce their resource-dependence, and the risks in proceeding with business as usual.

Ecuador's new development goal, for example, aims at reversing the country's ecological deficit by 2013. The United Arab Emirates' Abu Dhabi has already invested \$15 billion toward the development of solar and other renewable resources and seeks to lead the world in green technologies. These government leaders realize the longer they wait, the greater the risks to their economies and their citizen's well-being.

To learn more about how Global Footprint Network is working to make ecological limits central to policy and decision-making, go to www.footprintnetwork.org.

For More Information

About Global Footprint Network

Global Footprint Network, based in Oakland, California, is an international think-tank working to make ecological limits central to decision-making by advancing the use of the Ecological Footprint, a resource accounting tool that measures how much nature we have, how much we use and who uses what. By developing transparent, scientifically robust measures to help leaders monitor and protect ecological assets, Global Footprint Network is committed to fostering a world where all people can live well within the means of one planet. For more information, visit www.footprintnetwork.org

To learn about the methodology behind the National Footprint Account calculations, please visit www.footprintnetwork.org/methodology.

Download the **media backgrounder** at www.footprintnetwork.org/newsroom

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