

Greenhouse gas policies ignoring gap in household incomes, study says

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Government policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from consumers need to be fairer for household income levels, says a University of Alberta researcher.

A U of A study published recently online in the journal *Environment and Behaviour* looks at the different sources of [greenhouse gas emissions](#) from consumers, based on their income levels. The wealthiest households in Alberta emit the most [greenhouse gases](#), but too often, [income disparity](#) hasn't been factored in to current policies—such as the carbon flat tax that is levied to British Columbia residents.

Such policies tend to be based on data of CO² emitted by the average household—12.2 tonnes in Alberta according to the study, which surveyed 1,203 Albertans. Households in the province with the highest income actually emit 17.9 tonnes per year, while those with the lowest incomes generate 8.2 tonnes per year.

"Income disparity needs to be factored in when developing public policy, to avoid placing a disproportionate [financial burden](#) on people who can least afford it and who have contributed the least to the problem of greenhouse gases," said Emily Huddart-Kennedy, lead author and an assistant professor in the U of A Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology.

People should continue to follow environmentally-friendly practices in their daily lives, but they can also have far-reaching environmental

impact by buying smaller homes, taking public transit and most importantly, petitioning their government representatives "for [environmental policies](#) that are equitable," Huddart-Kennedy added.

Governments can consider providing incentives to build smaller homes, programs to reduce air travel and higher taxes for large or multiple vehicles, she added.

Provided by University of Alberta

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