

# 72% of all people live in countries with biocapacity deficits and below-average income

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A team of researchers from the Global Footprint Network, the Munasinghe Institute for Development, Lawrence Berkeley National

Laboratory and Missouri Botanical Garden has found that approximately 72% of people globally live in countries with a biocapacity deficit and also have below-average incomes. In their paper published in the journal *Nature Sustainability*, the group describes examining data on the biocapacity of every country in the world for the years between 1980 and 2017.

Biocapacity, in this context, is defined as the capacity of an ecosystem to regenerate its resources to sustain the people using them. An example would be the ability of an island to maintain enough fish population to sustain inhabitants. Other examples include groundwater refreshment and reforestation. In this new effort, the researchers looked at the ecosystem of every country in the world and its ability to support continued consumption. They also looked at GDP for every country they studied to learn more about the connection between biocapacity deficits and income levels for the people in each country.

The researchers found that overall, [global demand](#) for resources is outstripping the planet's ability to replenish them—and the problem is getting worse. In 1980, for example, humans were using resources at approximately 119% of the planet's ability to replenish them. By 2017, it was at 173%—a trend that is clearly unsustainable.

The researchers also found that approximately 72% of all people alive today live in countries with below-average income and which also have biocapacity deficits—a trend that is growing worse. Back in 1980, the percentage was just 57%. These numbers suggest that poverty is likely to grow worse globally as resources are depleted. The researchers also found that wealthier countries tend to be rich in natural resources, as well—just 14 % of them were found to have resource deficits—but sadly, they use approximately 52% of the planets' biocapacity.

The researchers conclude that a day of reckoning is coming as [poorer](#)

[countries](#) run out of resources and begin to face historic poverty levels.

**More information:** Mathis Wackernagel et al. The importance of resource security for poverty eradication, *Nature Sustainability* (2021). DOI: [10.1038/s41893-021-00708-4](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-021-00708-4)

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