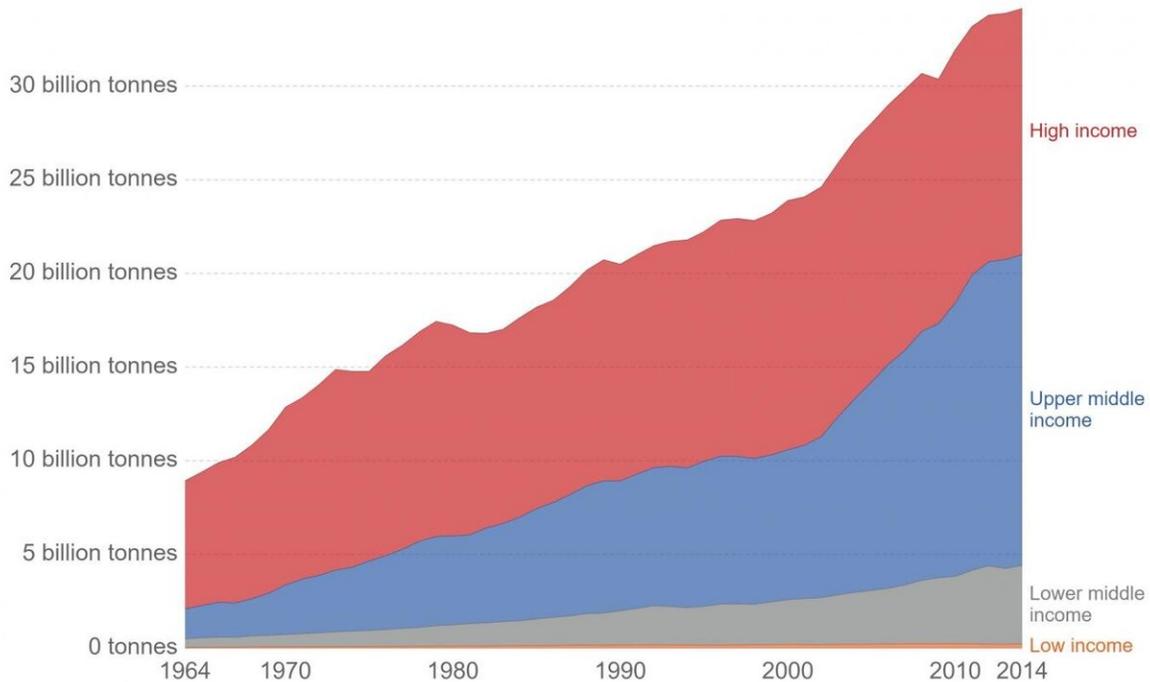


# New commentary on the famous 'Warning to Humanity' paper brings up global inequalities

April 8 2019

## Carbon dioxide emissions by income level

Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, differentiated by World Bank income group. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are measured in tonnes per year.



Source: World Bank

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Carbon dioxide emissions by income level. Credit: World Bank

By pointing out the western lifestyle is not "the norm and end goal of

societal evolution", the research team of Dr. Mohsen Kayal (University of Perpignan, France) contributes to the debate on the urgency of achieving sustainability, as ignited by the largely publicised article "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice" published in *BioScience* in 2017. Their Response paper in the open-access journal *Rethinking Ecology* emphasizes that societies in developing countries are often more dependent on natural resources, while least responsible for the ecological crisis.

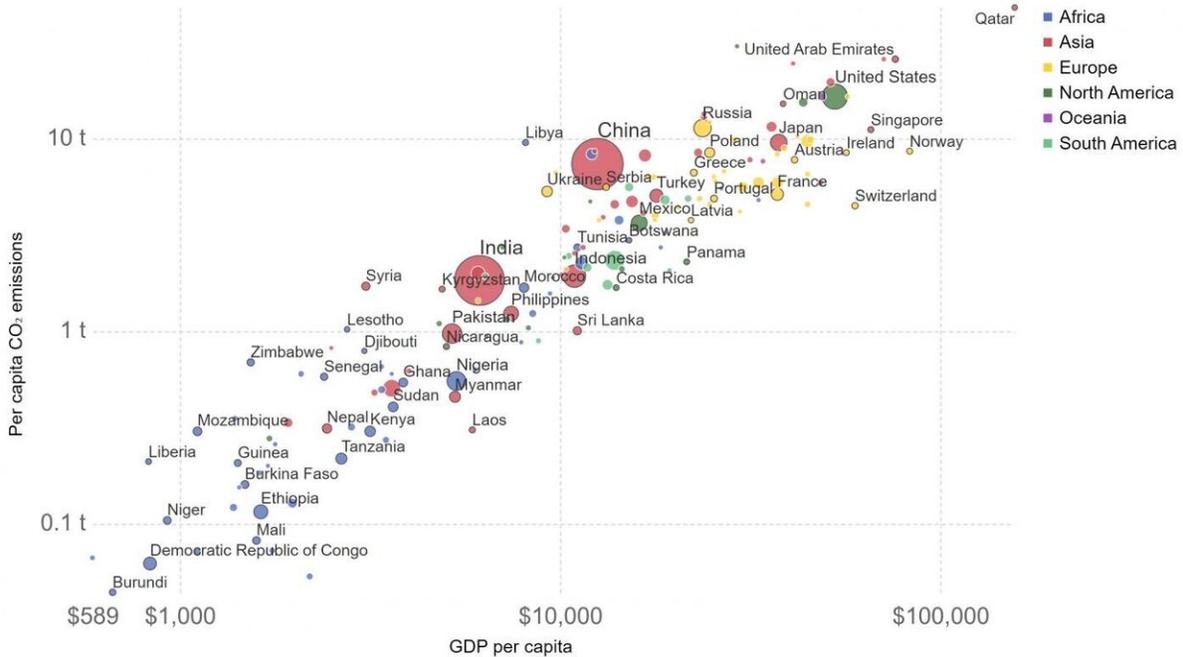
While expressing explicit support and endorsement for the call made in the original paper, the team argue that several of its recommendations "address symptoms rather than [root causes](#)", while steering away from historical patterns and underlying drivers of the global socio-economic system, namely those relating to wealth inequality, human demography, and food production.

According to the researchers, the desired universal sustainability cannot be achieved in a situation of inequitable wealth distribution. They highlight the link between the consumerism and neocolonialism in the western society and the environmental declines. Meanwhile, communities in the [developing world](#) are much more vulnerable to ecological disasters and their homelands are being overexploited and compromised for the production of a major part of the commodities sold around the world.

Inequitable distribution is also evident in the ecological footprint of the western world as opposed to poorer regions. The team of Dr. Mohsen Kayal question the appeal made in the Warning to Humanity paper that restricting birth rates is of primary concern when it comes to mitigating the anthropogenic effect on the planet. Rather, they argue that it is the excessive resource consumption and ecosystem-destructive practices observed in the [western lifestyle](#) that need to be prioritized.

### CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita vs GDP per capita, 2016

Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions per capita are measured in tonnes per person per year. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is measured in international-\$ in 2011 prices to adjust for price differences between countries and adjust for inflation.



Source: Global Carbon Project, Maddison (2017)

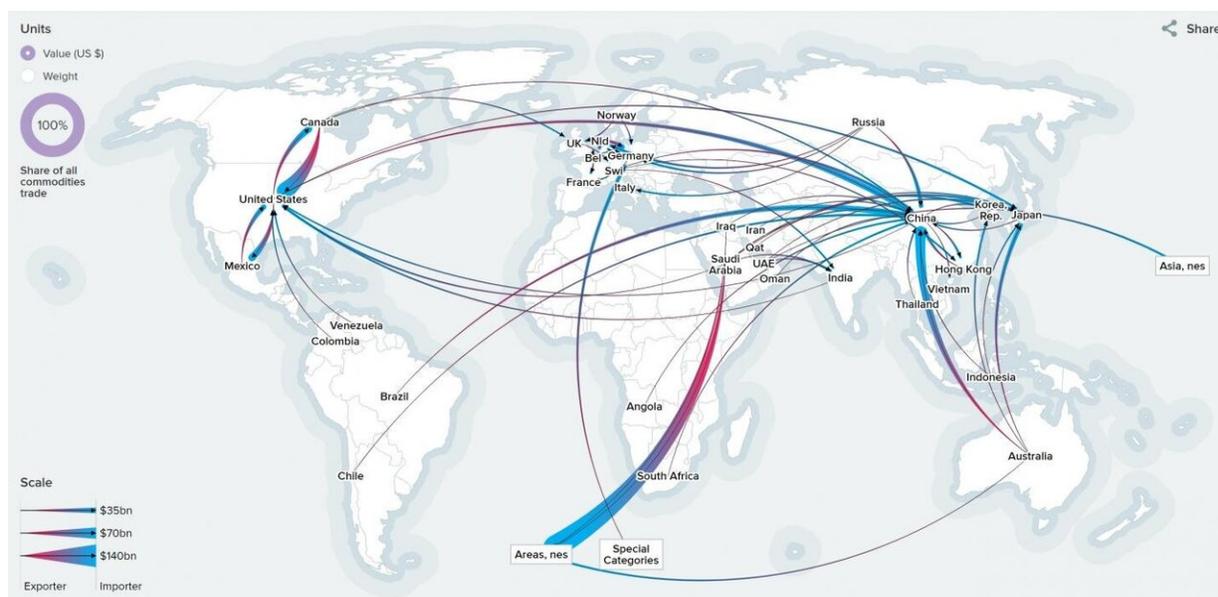
OurWorldInData.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions/ • CC BY

Carbon dioxide emissions per capita vs GDP per capita (2016). Credit: Global Carbon Project, Maddison (2017)

Citing the 2017 data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the authors note that there is indeed enough food being produced to meet the needs of even more people on Earth than there currently are. However, it is again the unequal distribution of resources that results in both hunger and obesity. In the meantime, the replacement of the current industrial model of agriculture with a suite of environmentally friendly practices (e.g. [cover crops](#), diverse crop rotations), the adoption of ecologically-based farming and well-managed grazing could preserve soils and their properties, while also increasing

yields, resilience to climate change and socio-economic development.

"Sustainability can only be achieved through prioritizing global ethics, including universal equality and respect for all forms of life," conclude the authors of the Response paper. "Sustainable solutions to Earth's socio-ecological crisis already exist, however humanity still needs to realize that pursuing the same practices that created these problems is not going to solve them."



Global Resource Trade. Credit: Chatham House

**More information:** Mohsen Kayal et al, Humanity and the 21 st century's resource gauntlet: a commentary on Ripple et al.'s article "World scientists' warning to humanity: a second notice", *Rethinking Ecology* (2019). [DOI: 10.3897/rethinkingecology.4.32116](https://doi.org/10.3897/rethinkingecology.4.32116)

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