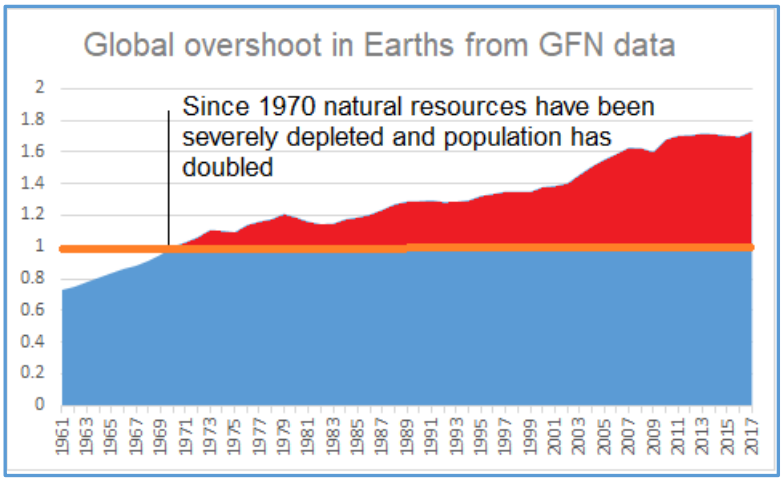
UN Charter for Ecological Justice



According to data from the Global Footprint Network, humanity have been exceeding the capacity of Earth to regenerate since the 1970's. This is a phenomenon known as 'ecological overshoot'. In 2018 it was estimated that we were using a biocapacity equivalent to about 1.7 Earth's. The Wikipedia entry for biocapacity contains this statement as at February 2023:

For example, there were roughly 12.2 billion hectares of biologically productive land and water areas on this planet in 2016. Dividing by the number of people alive in that year, 7.4 billion, gives a biocapacity for the Earth of ***1.6 global hectares per person****. These 1.6 global hectares include the areas for wild species that compete with people for space.*

To achieve sustainability we need biodiversity to thrive. E. O. Wilson is famous for recommending that at least half Earth's biocapacity is required for biodiversity to thrive. This means that the average biocapacity usage per capita in 2016 needed to be less than half the 1.6 global hectares that were available. So in 2016 the maximum biocapacity that was sustainably available was only 0.8 global hectares on average per person. The actual consumption in 2016 is irrelevant in this calculation, because we are just assessing the available biocapacity. Our actual usage was, and still is, well in excess of the available biocapacity. There are very few countries that are currently subsisting on less than 0.8 global hectares per capita; the global population is still rising; and Earth's biocapacity is rapidly diminishing due to desertification, climate extremes, and biodiversity loss. These factors all combine to ensure that we can never reach sustainability unless we are willing to undertake an urgent campaign to willingly reduce our population size, as well as reducing our consumption to the minimum levels required to subsist and maintain our emotional resilience.

Global average consumption from 2018 data is 2.77 global hectares per capita. There is scientific research which suggests that 2.14 global hectares per capita should be adequate for a human to achieve a fulfilled lifestyle; at this level of average consumption, Earth could sustain about 2.8 billion humans. Since 2022 our Human Rights include the right to a healthy environment. Chronic global ecological overshoot results in an unstable and unhealthy environment. When someone gives birth to a child, that child's right to a healthy environment is not met; that child is immediately embroiled in the ongoing mass extinction event.

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The UN Charter for Ecological Justice spells out the aspiration to voluntarily and equitably shrink our collective ecological footprint until we once again operate within the biocapacity of our planet, and all countries aspire to a modest consumption per capita, with 2.14gha as a guide. It will require new educational priorities: Realisation, Remorse and Reparation.

*This '**Charter for Ecological Justice**' seeks to inspire a new emotional maturity within the human race. This new era will be characterised by increasingly selfless behaviour both individually and collectively in the face of escalating existential threats. To this end, it recognises that our environmental impact is a product of our population size and the way that we utilise our affluence and technology. Henceforth we shall collectively and individually aspire to combine our free-choice, affluence and technology to redress the ecological imbalance, which is escalating the sixth mass extinction. All nations will collectively aspire to reduce their ecological footprint to less than half of the biocapacity available within their borders, as determined by the Global Footprint Network data. Globally, education and empowerment goals will prioritise the symbiotic relationships between ecological footprint, ecological balance, and the urgent need to release more than half of the biocapacity of the planet to sustain the needs of wildlife and biodiversity. Human intervention in wildlife populations will be discouraged unless an invasive species is deemed to be a serious threat to either local or global eco-systems. The Charter recommends that communities work towards living within the biocapacity of their borders. The ecological footprint of 2.14 gha per capita is a guide for a fulfilled life within a healthy ecosystem. Local targets for average footprint will need regular reviews to equitably reflect changing global and local circumstances*.

The chart below shows the current split between those above and below 2.14 gha per capita. The green columns show that a theoretical population size of 2.8 billion could be sustained if we reduce the global average ecological footprint per capita from 2.77gha to 2.14gha.