

# CONSUMER CULTURE AND HUMANITY'S GROWING FOOTPRINT

AS a result of growing **CONSUMERISM**, America is slowly increasing its **carbon emissions**, in turn expediting and perpetuating **global climate change**.

**FUN FACT!**  
THE AVERAGE US HOUSE SIZE HAS INCREASED BY OVER **55%** SINCE 1970!

THE BIGGER THE HOUSE, THE BIGGER THE CARBON FOOTPRINT! **WHY?**



How can downsizing your home shrink your carbon footprint?

LESS SPACE = LESS STUFF = LESS CARBON = SMALLER FOOTPRINT

<b>Tiny House</b>	<b>vs</b>	<b>Average</b>
2,000 lbs of CO <sub>2</sub> per year		28,000 lbs of CO <sub>2</sub> per year
on average 200 ft <sup>2</sup>		on average 2,500 ft <sup>2</sup>

- Typical households account for more than **60%** of global **greenhouse gas emissions**
  - Typical households account for **50-80%** of total **land, material, and water use**
- Journal of Industrial Ecology**

- Require fewer utilities
- Allows for fewer possessions
- Smaller physical footprint
- Lower expenses -> less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

- Tiny houses **reduce** our carbon footprint
- Tiny houses only produce on average **2,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> annually**
- While typical houses produce on average **28,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> annually**

- Renewable Energy World**
- Reduced emissions -> **weakening and slowing of climate change**
  - Weakening and slowing of climate change -> **less drastic systemic damage and a happy Earth**

## WHAT ELSE CAN I DO??

- Higher prices **discourage superfluous spending**
- Supports **local economy**
- Supports **ethical product**
- Reduces required transportation -> **reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**
- Fosters a sense of community -> encouraging use of sustainable practices

Buy  Local Foods

## EDUCATE



- Better enable everyday citizens to make informed decisions about their consumption habits
- Sheds light on **societal and cost benefits of sustainable route** long term
- Inevitably leads to **price drop** of sustainable products/services
- Price drop -> **greater accessibility** for a broader range of socio-economic class

## the Cause:

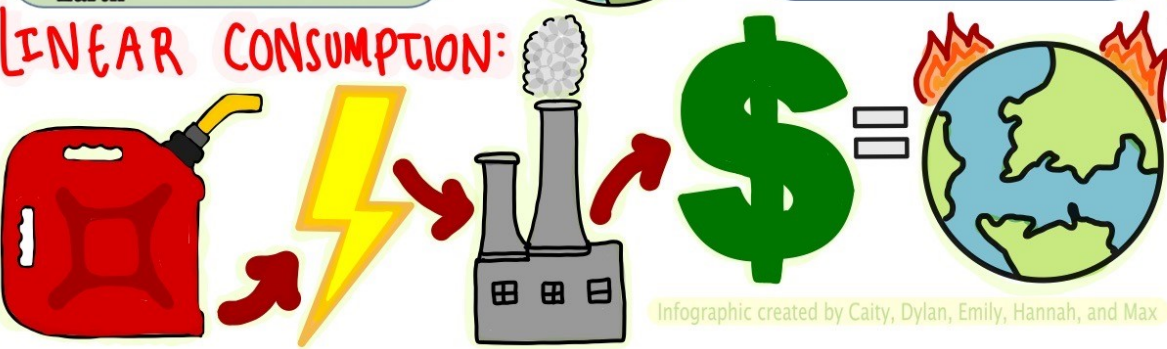
Following with the rise in manufacturing and industry at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Americans began purchasing more material goods than ever before. This meant that **big industry** and **mass production** now played an integral role in the market economy and, as such, had to be properly maintained and expanded upon. In order to do so, however, an extensive network of machinery and transportation were required; both of which require **huge sums of energy** (the vast majority of which came from **fossil fuels**). To access the stored energy in fossil fuels they must undergo **combustion** which subsequently releases **carbon dioxide** and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

## the Effect: (and why it matters)

Upon entering the atmosphere, greenhouse gases begin to effectively trap infrared radiation emitted from the Sun. As a result, the lower atmosphere begins to steadily warm in what is known as the **greenhouse effect**. The greenhouse effect, when exacerbated by the presence of large quantities of greenhouse gases, disrupts many of the Earth's natural cycles and systems, resulting in drastic changes to climatic patterns, glacial melt, ocean pH, and extreme weather events, to name just a few. By increasing or continuing with our current consumption habits, we are in turn supporting mass production efforts which further perpetuate and magnify the greenhouse effect which further enables climate change.

## Learn MORE...

To learn more about the rise of American consumerism, visit <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/tupperware-consumer/> To help the cause, consider buying local, purchasing fewer products, and looking into other ways to shrink your carbon footprint!



Infographic created by Caity, Dylan, Emily, Hannah, and Max