

Degree of Impact Cards

Degree of Impact ENERGY

Americans constitute less than 5% of the world's population, but are responsible for nearly 21% of the world's annual energy consumption, including 22% of fossil fuels.

On average, one American consumes as much energy as:

- 2 Germans,
- 9 Syrians,
- 11 Columbians,
- 20 Indians,
- 112 Haitians, or
- 304 Ethiopians⁶

Degree of Impact WASTE

The more we consume, the more waste we produce. By the time a baby born today in the United States reaches the age of 82 years, he or she will have produced nearly 60 tons of garbage.¹⁸

The average American generates 4.4 pounds of solid waste each day. The average person in France produces 2.9 pounds²⁰, in South Africa produces 1.5 pounds²¹, while residents of Egypt and Pakistan produce less than 1 pound per day.²²

Degree of Impact GLOBAL WARMING

In 2007, the United States was responsible for 20% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, more than any other country.¹²

China, with over four times more people than the United States, now produces more total carbon dioxide, but the U.S. leads in per capita emissions.¹³

Carbon dioxide is the primary greenhouse gas, responsible for 60% of global warming caused by greenhouse gases.¹⁴

Degree of Impact WATER POLLUTION

In the United States, 44% of streams, 64% of lakes, and 30% of estuaries are unfit for swimming or fishing.¹⁵

Agricultural chemicals, eroded sediment, and animal wastes have fouled over 173,000 miles of waterways.¹⁶

Almost 45% of our drinking water comes from groundwater sources, and 38 states reported finding pesticides, some of which cause cancer, in their groundwater.¹⁷

Degree of Impact NATURAL RESOURCES

A person living in an industrialized country consumes:

- twice as much grain,
- three times as much meat
- nine times as much paper, and
- eleven times as much gasoline,

as someone in a developing country.⁷ North America, with 5% of the world's population, consumes 30% of the aluminum.⁸

Degree of Impact LAND USE

In the last 200 years the United States has lost:

- 71% of its topsoil,
- 50% of its wetlands,
- 90% of its northwestern old-growth forests, and
- 99% of its tallgrass prairie.^{9,10}

In the United States, more than 8,000 square miles of land per year disappear under suburban sprawl—most often land of superior quality for agriculture.¹¹

The statistics on these cards were drawn from numerous demographic resources, as cited in *The Basics of Population Education*.