How many Earths do you need?

All people need food and water, a roof over their heads, and sometimes, heat to survive.
We all share the Earth's resources, but some people use much more than others.
Globally we're eating, travelling and consuming as though we had 1.7 Earths!

Every human affects the planet through how they live. For example, this includes what we eat, what things we buy and how we travel. How much impact a country or person has is often simply called our ecological footprint. Along with countries like Kuwait and the USA, Sweden has the largest ecological footprint per person in the world.

What is the footprint?

An ecological footprint refers to the "imprint" that every person in nature makes on the surface of the Earth. The more resources we use, the more we affect the environment.

The size of your footprint is connected to the area used to produce what you use, from food to gadgets, as well as the area required to take care of your waste. Based on how much land and resources exist on the planet, you can calculate how many globes we would need if everyone lived like you.

Bigger handprints

If you do good things for the environment, like recycle more and conserve water, your ecological handprint increases. It helps if the things you buy and the energy you use are produced in a way that affects nature as little as possible. For example, if the car you travel in runs on electricity instead of fossil fuel. Locally grown food often has a smaller footprint than eating things grown on the other side of the world that are transported to your country.

Create more waste

In wealthy countries, the amount of waste per person has multiplied many times over in the past 20 years, and this has to change. Waste includes carbon dioxide, the gas released when we use oil, petrol and carbon, or burn rubbish and wood. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that contributes strongly to climate change, which in turn causes droughts, floods, and acidification of the oceans.

Different countries face different challenges. In Sweden, carbon dioxide emissions account for more than half of the footprint. A lot depends on our consumption of food and gadgets.

Big, rich footprints

Rich countries have the biggest ecological footprint, while poor ones have much smaller footprints. Sometimes there are big differences between different people in the same country. A child in the Amazon rainforest uses almost no resources at all, while a rich rancher could have their own aeroplane, several cars, air conditioning and a pool. That creates a gigantic footprint.

What has to happen now?

Rich places must reduce production and consumption in order to reduce their footprints. Meanwhile, on the other hand, many poor people need to increase their footprint in order to have dignified lives with electricity, heat, food and clean water. The challenge is to find a more environmentally friendly path to a better life than the environmentally hazardous alternatives that rich countries have been using for a long time.

Small, everyday actions can make a big difference. Remember to:

- Not throw rubbish on the ground.
- Not buy unnecessary things.
- Repair, reuse and recycle.
- Use renewable energy.
What else can you do?

If everyone lived like the average inhabitant of the world, we would need 1.7 Earths. And if everyone lived like they do in…

… North America = 5 Earths

… Africa = 0.8 Earths

… South America = 1.8 Earths

… Europe = 2.8 Earths

… Asia = 0.7 Earths

Children of the world strike for the climate with Greta

Greta, age 18, is living proof that kids can make a big difference. In September 2018, she stood alone before the parliamentary building in Sweden every Friday, on strike from school for the climate. She demanded that adults listen to the science and start to take serious action to stop climate change, which threatens people, animals and nature.

Greta's protest quickly spread throughout the world via social media. Children in other countries were inspired by Greta and also began to strike on Fridays. Her battle inspired a global movement called Fridays for Future.
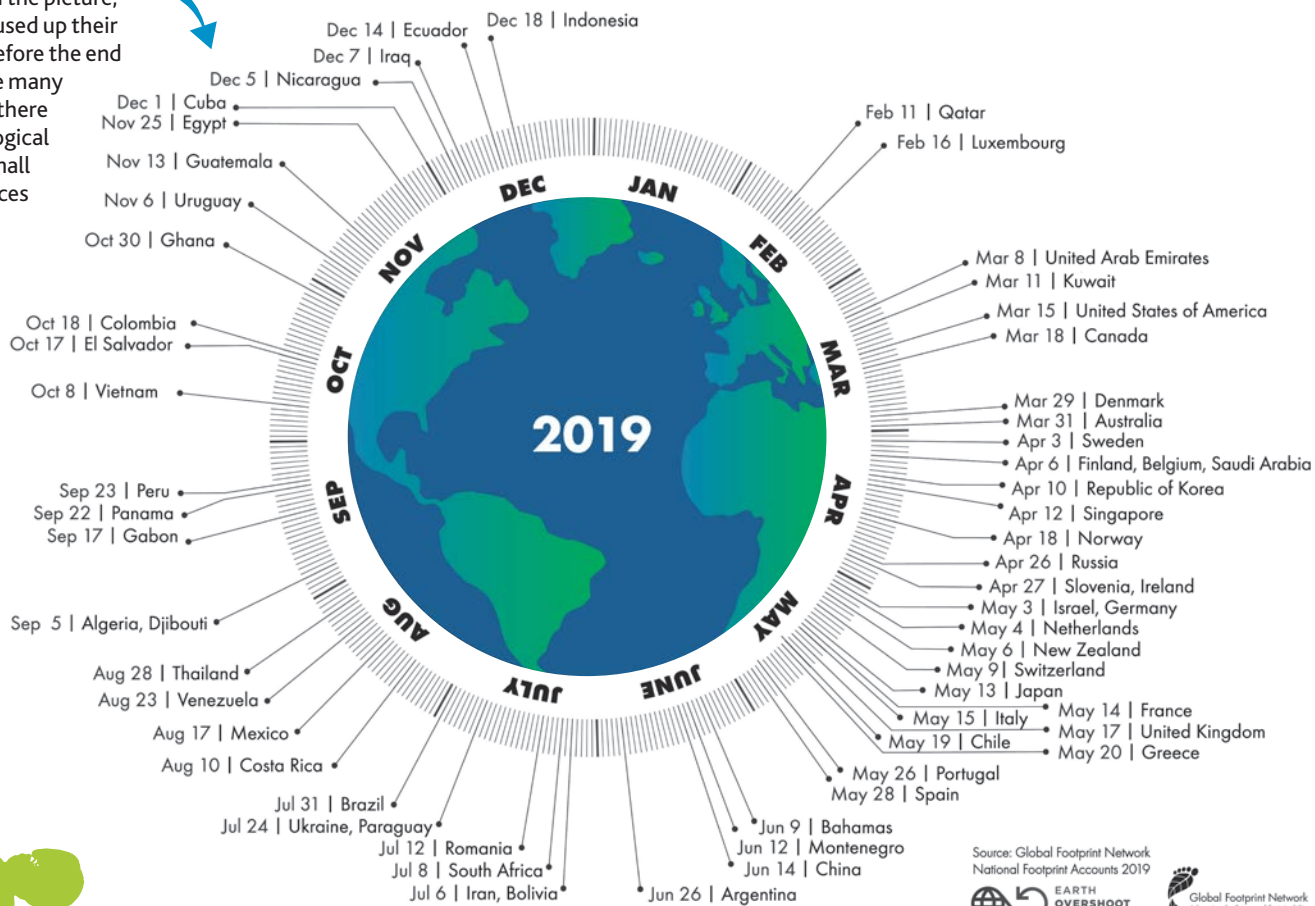
One Friday in September 2019, four million people in over 160 countries went on strike for the climate with Greta. Were you one of them?

How long will the Earth's resources last?

Humanity uses up more water, food, energy and more than nature can regenerate in a year. Some countries use up far more resources than others. The day when all resources run out is called Overshoot Day, and in 2020 it fell on 22 August!

"You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all future generations are upon you."

Greta, 16, in her speech to the UN in 2019

As you can see in the picture, some countries used up their resources well before the end of the year, while many countries aren't there at all. Their ecological footprint is so small that their resources are enough.

Dec 18 | Indonesia
Dec 14 | Ecuador
Dec 7 | Iraq
Dec 5 | Nicaragua
Dec 1 | Cuba
Nov 25 | Egypt
Nov 13 | Guatemala
Nov 6 | Uruguay
Oct 30 | Ghana
Oct 18 | Colombia
Oct 17 | El Salvador
Oct 8 | Vietnam
Sep 23 | Peru
Sep 22 | Panama
Sep 17 | Gabon
Sep 5 | Algeria, Djibouti
Aug 28 | Thailand
Aug 23 | Venezuela
Aug 17 | Mexico
Aug 10 | Costa Rica
Jul 31 | Brazil
Jul 24 | Ukraine, Paraguay
Jul 12 | Romania
Jul 8 | South Africa
Jul 6 | Iran, Bolivia

Feb 11 | Qatar
Feb 16 | Luxembourg
Mar 8 | United Arab Emirates
Mar 11 | Kuwait
Mar 15 | United States of America
Mar 18 | Canada
Mar 29 | Denmark
Mar 31 | Australia
Apr 3 | Sweden
Apr 6 | Finland, Belgium, Saudi Arabia
Apr 10 | Republic of Korea
Apr 12 | Singapore
Apr 18 | Norway
Apr 26 | Russia
Apr 27 | Slovenia, Ireland
May 3 | Israel, Germany
May 4 | Netherlands
May 6 | New Zealand
May 9 | Switzerland
May 13 | Japan
May 14 | France
May 15 | Italy
May 17 | United Kingdom
May 19 | Chile
May 20 | Greece
May 26 | Portugal
May 28 | Spain
Jun 9 | Bahamas
Jun 12 | Montenegro
Jun 14 | China
Jun 26 | Argentina

2019

Source: Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts 2019

EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY

Global Footprint Network
Advancing the Science of Sustainability