

# Lifestyle

## Measuring overall environmental impact

PERSONAL CHOICES TO REDUCE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE  
Average values for developed countries based on current emissions.



This graph was developed by GreenFaith and is adapted from Wynes and Nicholas, 2017, Environmental Research Letter.

From: <https://livingthechange.net/my-commitment>

- Make a pledge on [Do Action](#):
  - [Choose a 'Do Action' here](#), find out how much you can reduce your ecological impact and find out what benefits it can bring to you personally.
  - Actions include trying out a plant-based diet, changing energy providers, reducing food waste, eating locally and seasonally, composting food waste, flying less and more.

## 'Greening' your home

([Sadeh](#) has some brilliant advice on its website. We have compiled and edited some here)

- Changing energy providers:
  - Switching to a green energy provider is a giant step you can take with your consumer power, to reduce your carbon footprint. It may seem daunting, but it's surprisingly easy and takes far less time than you think! The following are a sample of 100% renewable electricity providers. They guarantee that all the electricity they pay for is sourced from 100% renewable sources such as Wind and Solar generated. They all provide a step by step guide on changing your energy supply to them. The more of us who switch to exclusively renewable energy providers the more money will be invested in renewable energy research and generation. Moving us more quickly away from a fossil fuel reliant energy sector.
  - [Good Energy](#) and [Ecotricity](#) produce electricity and gas through renewable sources, such as wind, solar, the sea, organic material, and grass.

- [Bulb](#) support smaller community electricity generation projects and [Robin Hood energy](#) are a non for profit company set up by Nottingham City Council who use profits to subsidise bills of low income households to reduce fuel poverty. (words and info from [here](#))
- [A more detailed guide from Ethical Consumer on gas and electricity tariffs](#)
- Smart Meters
  - Installing a smart meter allows you to gain total control of your usage and reduce your bills by connecting your thermostat to an app on your phone. This allows you to adjust your heating around your changing behaviour patterns easily from your phone. Check if your [energy provider](#) is rolling them out via the governments smart meter scheme.
- Join a local community energy scheme. Find out more about what's available near you via <https://communityenergyengland.org/> and <https://www.ukcec.org/>
- Look at how you can reduce energy use, using [home energy saving tips from Energy Saving Trust](#)
- Green Cleaning and Natural Remedies
  - The Women's Environment Network (WEN) guide to [green household cleaning](#)
  - The Independent's [10 best Eco Cleaners](#) - if you don't was to make your own
  - [Soap nuts as laundry detergent](#)
- Zero waste/recycling
  - Refill, recycling, reuse, reduce plastic
  - Take a step toward a **zero waste lifestyle**. Lauren Singer and Bea Johnson have youtube channels and write fantastic [blogs](#) full of tips and tricks.
- Composting
  - Reduce waste at landfill and add incredible nutrients for your garden soil.
- Thames Water gadgets to reduce water consumption and bills
  - [Thames Water](#) are giving away gadgets to help you save water and reduce your bill.
- Gardening:
  - Do some activities in your garden to make it more friendly to birds, bees and wildlife.
  - Use some of the activities suggested [here](#), or create a personal plan for your garden

## **Minimising waste: why reduce, re-use, repair and recycle?**

According the University of British Columbia, here is a short summary of commonly used items and how long it takes for them to biodegrade when they are scattered about as litter:

Item	Length of time
Cotton rags	1-5 months
Paper	2-5 months

Rope	3-14 months
Orange peels	6+ months due to the antibacterial mold that develops
Wool socks	1-5 yrs
Cigarette butts	1-12 yrs
Plastic coated paper milk cartons	5 yrs
Plastic bags	10-20 yrs
Leather shoes	25-40 yrs or more
Nylon fabric	30-40 yrs
Tin cans	50-100 yrs and then we get toxic tin into the environment!
Aluminum cans	80-100 yrs and then we get toxic aluminum into the environment!
Plastic 6-pack holder rings	450 yrs and, of course, how many birds have died by suffocating after getting caught in these rings in the meantime?
Glass bottles	1 million yrs
Plastic bottles	Forever ( <a href="#">taken from here</a> )

- Reduce:
  - Reducing the amount of waste you produce is always more carbon-efficient than recycling it after it is produced.
  - Use the [Meeting Climate Impact Calculator](#) to calculate what contribution waste makes to your overall footprint.
  - Use china or long-lasting plastic tableware rather than disposables. Avoid packaged food.
  - The Guardian has gathered the facts and reviewed some of the different reusable cups available as an alternative to disposable cups. The top three are [JOCO cups](#), [KeepCups](#) and [Starbucks reusable cups](#)
  - If possible create a compost bin (or ask someone to take appropriate food scraps home for theirs).
- Repair:
  - When things break or wear out try to mend them before buying new items. For example, could you re-cover chairs rather than replace them?
- Reuse:
  - Buy recycled goods if possible, including toilet paper, paper towels and napkins, and stationery.
  - Buy labels from charities so you can reuse envelopes.
- Recycle:

- Have clearly labelled boxes for each category of recycling – these can be taken to local authority recycling centres when full, if the council won't collect them.
- All light bulbs can now be recycled, including energy efficient CFLs. Check with your local authority.
- Take unwanted goods to a charity shop or advertise on Freecycle ([www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)) or Freegle ([www.ilovefreegle.org](http://www.ilovefreegle.org)). Perhaps set up your own activities in the synagogue - e.g., clothes-swaps or up-cycling sessions. ([Quaker resource](#))

### **A caution on electronic waste**

[Read more about the problem of electronic waste.](#)

7 suggestions from Canfei Nesharim we can all take on to reduce this serious problem.

- 1 Encourage sellers and manufacturers of your favorite electronics products to participate in a take-back and recycling program.  
  
Parallel to this is to frequent those stores that participate in electronic product recycling
- 2 programs and purchase those products from manufacturers that develop “green electronics” products.
- 3 Upgrade rather than replace when possible—you will use less and extend the life of your products.
- 4 Donate old electronics to a charities. In fact, encourage your place of employment to be an active participant in such efforts.
- 5 See what your local council is doing to reduce the e-waste stream.  
  
Check the path taken of discarded/recycled products—do they really get recycled and if
- 6 so, are the workers who do the recycling adequately protected from these toxic chemicals?
- 7 And last, but not least, before buying, ask yourself, “Is my old version still useful?” and “Do I really need this item?”

### **If you are buying, think about your values**

The consumption of products and services which minimise social and environmental damage:

- [Steps to become more conscious from Sadeh](#)

Choosing to buy from companies who:

- do everything they can to reduce their carbon footprint and reducing their impact on climate change.

- looking after the human rights of their workforce. This means no child labour, providing healthy and safe environments for their workforce, and providing them with a living wage.
- provide good standards of animal welfare and no animal testing (*words from [Sadeh](#)*)

Buy more from charity- and second-hand shops where you can.

Tools for helping us make informed choices about where we shop:

- [Ethical Consumer](#)
- [asktheg](#)
- [The Good Shopping Guide](#)
- [lywto](#) helps you to find green services in your local area. (*words from [Sadeh](#)*)

## **Water**

- [Check out these tips to preserve water quality and quantity](#)

## **Fashion/Clothing**

You've probably all heard the stats that are thrown around when we talk about the clothing industry, the damage it does to the environment, to energy footprints and to waste (millions of decomposing clothes giving out methane; gallons of water being drained to grow crazy amount of cotton; chemicals flooding the earth as we dye it).

As Eileen Fisher, clothing industry magnate said last year "The clothing industry is the second largest polluter in the world...second only to oil."

You may have even watched a documentary on young brits going to experience sweat-shops for themselves or read an article about Primark's and Mango's workers dying in Rana Plaza.

And perhaps you felt overwhelmed, unable to know where to turn to for your next fashion fix or just a simple pair of jeans. Like many, you're used to cheap clothing and you weren't sure how to react to the news that Uzbekistan is the fourth biggest exporter of cotton globally and the government of Uzbekistan uses one of the largest state-sponsored systems of forced labour to harvest it. You weren't sure how to make a positive change when the disconnect between what was seductively sitting in the brightly lit shop and the journey it has taken to get there is so large.

Similar to becoming vegan, you worried that you would have to dramatically change your behaviour so you wouldn't be complicit in the violent damage a t-shirt was unwittingly causing. Maybe you worried that you would end up paying unaffordable prices for a hemp chemise you didn't really want.

Luckily none of this is necessary.

The answers are here.

The rules of ethical purchasing is try to buy something when at least one of the following is achieved:

Recycled, Made Locally, Naturally, Sustainably and no Sweat Shops.

This can be done most easily by charity shopping when you rescue unwanted textiles, give money to charity for them and then come home with something fabulous at a third of the price of it's original retail value: Win win.

But there are times which call for buying something new....(words from [Sadeh](#))

[Sadeh's top 5 ethical brands and high-street shops with sustainability programmes](#)

## **Food**

Globally, 70 per cent of agricultural land is used to raise animals, and they are fed one-third of all the cereals we grow. [Research](#) published by The Lancet suggests that reducing meat, dairy and egg consumption would make a significant contribution to human food and water security, as well as benefiting human health.

These days, livestock farming involves factory conditions that would be intolerable for most of us to think about; fruits and vegetables are grown using intensive pest control that wipes out wildlife. The fertiliser run-off from intensive arable farming changes the nutrients in rivers, causing significant environmental damage that flows through to the oceans.

And that's before we consider the pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from transporting food, raising animals, cutting down forest to grow fodder - all of which impact the environment and contribute to climate change.

Choosing locally produced food and reducing meat and dairy consumption lowers the environmental impact of our food choices. Where possible, buying direct from farmers helps make local food production viable.

### **Eat LOAF food - locally grown, organic, animal friendly and fairtrade.**

- [BBC Climate change food calculator: What's your diet's carbon footprint?](#)
- Eat by the seasons: This is the most sustainable way of eating. Your food has the best flavours during the seasons they are meant to be grown.
  - <http://www.eattheseasons.co.uk/>
  - <http://eatseasonably.co.uk/what-to-eat-now/calendar/>
- Grow your own: If you have garden or a sunny windowsill in your kitchen have a go at growing your own herbs, fruit or veg.
- Seek out organic veg box scheme:
  - These delivery schemes bring fresh, healthy, organic fruit and vegetables straight to your door. Some allow you to collect your box from a convenient location instead, if you're not at home much. [Use this online directory](#) to find a local box scheme near you, support your local organic grower and start enjoying fresh organic veg.

- [Check out organic growing guidelines](#)
- Try eat less meat/dairy:
  - For many of us hoping to become an ethical food consumer, turning vegan can feel overwhelming. Although we like the idea of it, totally cutting out dairy, eggs, fish and meat can be too difficult for some of us to keep up long term, as we love them too much. However, reducing our consumption of these products and eating them as a treat will still make a big difference to reducing our carbon footprint on the environment. There are so many options out there so decide what works for you. (Sadeh)
  - <https://www.veganrecipeclub.org.uk/>
  - <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-earth>
  - <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/nov/01/third-of-britons-have-stopped-or-reduced-meat-eating-vegan-vegetarian-report>
- Find out how farmed animals are reared
- [The 'farm animals' section of the Compassion in World Farming website](#) provides a good overview of the farmed lives of pigs, chickens, cows, sheep, turkeys, fish and rabbits. (Eco-Church resources)
- Eat sustainable fish:
  - Download [the Pocket Good Fish Guide from The Marine Conservation Society](#). This publication tells you which fish are the best sustainable choices, which fish you should avoid completely, and the fish you can eat just occasionally to limit pressure on their stocks. Safeguard the future of our fisheries and other marine wildlife by only choosing fish from sustainable sources
- Fairtrade: <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>

*More food advice:*

- Specific food advice from Sadeh: <https://sadehfarm.co.uk/ethical-consumer-food> (also have great recipe recommendations)
- [Ethical consumer recommended sustainable food and drink list](#)
- Ethical food apps:
  - [Too good to go](#) - buying food restaurants would otherwise throw away
  - [Buycott](#) - scan items to make sure you are using not supporting unethical companies ([Sadeh](#))

See if you can join a [Community Supported Agriculture](#) project through your community.

Useful resources:

- [Learn more about Cooperatives in the UK](#)
- [Use the 'Food Cooperatives' toolkit to find out more about what food coops are, and set up your own](#)
- Have a look at some ethical and organic wholesalers such as [Suma](#) and [Infinity Foods](#)
- [Learn more about Food Cooperatives in Wales](#)

## **Ethical financial investment**

The way in which we use money is one of the many ways we can build a low-carbon, sustainable future. Money acts in the world on our behalf, and, whether we have a little or a lot, where we put it matters. Our bank accounts, pension funds and the savings of our meeting investments make us all part of the wider financial system. Depending on who we bank or invest with, our money could on the one hand be used to finance the development of a low-carbon, sustainable future, through funding renewable energy for example; on the other it might be lent to companies that cause pollution and threaten human rights. Translating our desire to use our money ethically into financial decision-making may seem like a big challenge. There are, however, many resources available to help you with this task. ([Quaker resource](#))

- Banks and Building Societies:
  - Find out more about ethical banking [here](#)
  - What is your bank/building society's ethical policy? Do they have an environmental policy? Compare the policies of different banks, including those on green/ethical lending using [this website](#).
  - Consider avoiding the main high street banks and putting your finances into those considered more ethical. You can use [this website](#) to research more ethical options for your money.
- Stocks and Shares. You might want to consider:
  - Negative screening: you can refuse to invest in things you think are unethical.
  - Positive screening: you can consciously invest in companies that are doing positive things for the environment; or you can consciously invest in the ethically 'best' companies in each sector.
  - Engagement: you may choose to accept that the companies you invest in are not perfect but that you can engage with them to try to influence them to change.
  - Again, [Your Ethical Money](#) and [Ethical Consumer](#) provide information on ethical investments (Your Ethical Money also compare them on the basis of their environmental policies.)
- Social investment:
  - Areas in which social investment opportunities are emerging include community land and reinvestment trusts, ecological building projects, organic food and fair trade initiatives and microcredit-based social development programmes. ([Quaker resource](#))
- Search [Ethical Consumer](#) for 'good money' banks, pensions, savings and investment options. They also provide ethical product guides for [Ethical Investment Funds](#) and a range of other [Ethical Money products](#).

Divestment from fossil fuels:

- <https://gogreenem.home.blog/>
- [Guardian article detailing success of divestment movement so far](#)

## **Green 'champion' at the synagogue**

Something about having a member of the community or of staff who pushes forward green policies and actions based on these resources?

Quite a nice framework from the Jewish Climate Change Campaign on 'Education, Action and Advocacy' ([page 5-6](#)) to support a green champion define their role and how to achieve success:

	Education	Action	Advocacy
Individual & Family			
Institution: Synagogue, Community Center, School or other			
Greater Community			

Building in some of the lifestyle recommendations from [Jewish CCC](#) (p21-24) into our communities

#### Creating green policies

Jewish CCC recommendations for Lifestyle changes in line with Jewish values [Jewish CCC](#) (p21-24). *Could be something EcoSynagogue edits and creates - a set of 'aims' for the community.*