

Leading on emission cuts

A guide to industrialised country action

The Industrialised countries are nations like the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the European states. These nations contributed the bulk of the human induced CO₂ currently in the atmosphere and so have a historic responsibility for climate change that means they need to take strong action to prevent it.

The science is clear

If the rise in global temperatures exceeds 2°C our climate risks passing a tipping point. Beyond this point feedback loops may cause temperature rise to accelerate beyond human control and catastrophic climate change becomes inevitable. That means mass migration, mass starvation and mass extinction.

To avert this major emission cuts are needed.

Why now?

The greater we delay, the less chance the world has of avoiding dangerous levels of climate change. To prevent the rise in temperatures from exceeding 2°C global emissions of greenhouse gases must peak before 2015, and then decline sharply. That makes immediate action a priority.

Three reasons to lead

Industrialised countries should take the lead for three reasons

1. *Historically they have contributed most to the problem*

Industrialised countries built their economies on the basis of massive fossil fuel emissions. Now they must pay back this carbon debt. Pushing responsibility onto developing countries is unfair.

2. *They have the greatest capacity to act*

Only industrialised nations have the finance and technology needed to take action on a sufficient scale.

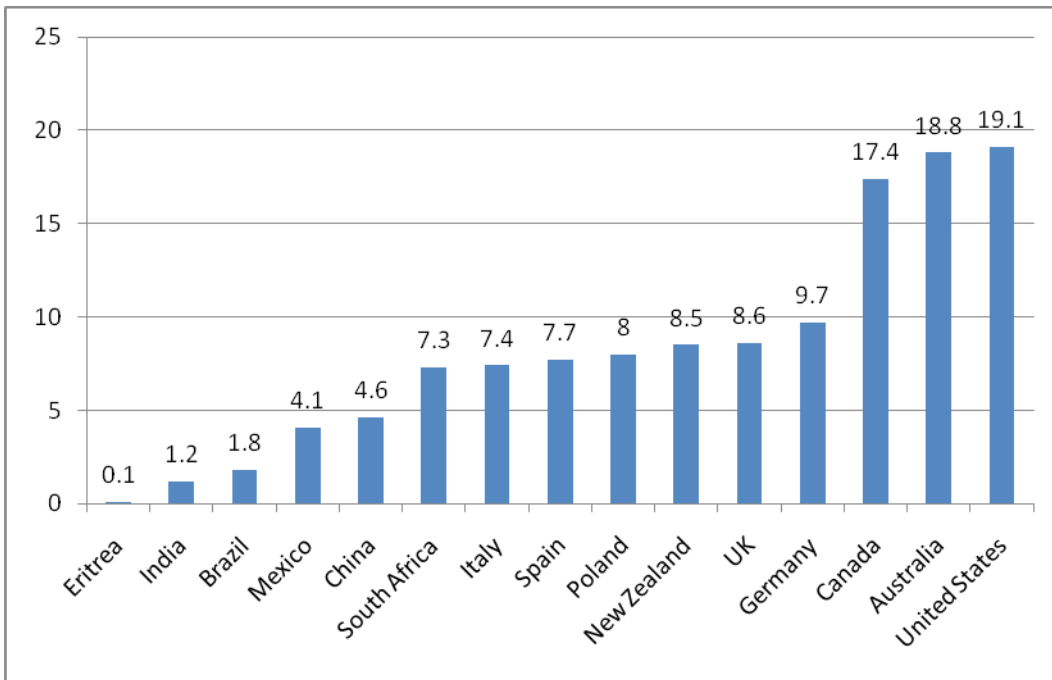
3. *They have the highest emissions per capita*

In 2006 the average US citizen emitted 19 tonnes of CO₂. That's 190 times more than an Eritrean, almost 15 times more than an Indian and more than four times more than a Chinese person. New Zealand, one of the smallest industrialised countries with just 4.3 million people, is responsible for the same emissions as a collection of developing nations with a combined population of 420 million.

Level of ambition and domestic action

To play their part in avoiding catastrophic climate change industrialised countries need to transform their economies into low [carbon] [emission] economies. As a group, they should commit to emission cuts of 40% by 2020. At least three quarters of that cut needs to come from real action taken within their borders. No more than a quarter should come from buying offsets from developing countries.

Per capita emissions of CO2 from fuel combustion



Source : CO₂ emissions from fuel combustion. Highlights. 2009 Edition.- IEA