

Billionaires create a million times more CO₂ (carbon dioxide)

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<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2211/221110-super-rich-co2-emissions.html>

This lesson was adapted from Breaking News English.com, Ready-to-Use English Lessons by Sean Banville

Warm-up (one by one, students suggest a match for #1-10)

1. **SYNONYM MATCH:** (The words in on the left are from the news article.)¹

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. damage | a. examination |
| 2. release | b. important |
| 3. significantly | c. as a whole |
| 4. analysis | d. gave |
| 5. collectively | e. discharge |
| 6. huge | f. got away |
| 7. provided | g. harm |
| 8. major | h. talked about |
| 9. discussed | i. seriously |
| 10. escaped | j. very big |

Vocabulary:

1. climate: the typical, current weather conditions in a particular area
2. emissions: gas or pollution that is sent into the air (e.g., from a car, factory)
3. luxury: very expensive, and normally considered to be bigger or better than needed; not really needed but pleasing and enjoyable

*Instructions: Teacher reads paragraph one, then do the “**matching**” exercise. Repeat for paragraph 2. Then get students to recite the whole article sentence by sentence.*

Many people are concerned these day about climate change. The news is filled with reports about the **damage** being done to the environment by industries, **households**, **belching** cows and the **release** of **methane** from **permafrost**. A new report highlights a source of CO₂ emissions that few of us are aware of - billionaires. The British charity Oxfam has reported that the **lavish** lifestyles of the world's wealthiest people create **significantly** more CO₂ than the average person. It **conducted** an **analysis** of the investments and lifestyles of 125 of the world's richest billionaires. The conclusion was that the average billionaire is responsible for 3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year. This is a million times more than the average person creates. **Collectively**, billionaires create as much CO₂ as France.

Matching: Paragraph 1²

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. household | a. Emitting wind noisily from the stomach through the mouth. |
| 2. belching | b. A thick subsurface layer of soil that remains below freezing point throughout the year, mainly in polar regions. |
| 3. methane | c. A home and the people who live in it regarded as one unit. |
| 4. permafrost | d. Organized and carried out. |
| 5. lavish | e. Luxuriously rich. |

¹ Answers: 1g, 2e, 3i, 4a, 5c, 6j, 7d, 8b, 9h, 10f

² Answers: 1c, 2a, 3g, 4b, 5e, 6d, 7f

6. **conducted** f. As a group; as a whole.
 7. **collectively** g. A colourless, odourless flammable gas which is the main constituent of natural gas. It has the chemical formula CH₄.

The lifestyles of billionaires are damaging to the environment. Luxury yachts, **extravagant mansions** and private jets mean the super-rich have a **huge carbon footprint**. This is made bigger by the investments they make. Speaking at the COP 27 Climate Change Conference in Egypt, an Oxfam spokesperson **provided** details about CO₂ and the super-rich. She said: "The **major** and growing responsibility of wealthy people for **overall emissions** is rarely **discussed** or considered in **climate policy** making. This has to change." She added: "These billionaire investors at the top of the **corporate** pyramid have a **huge** responsibility for driving climate breakdown. They have **escaped accountability** for too long."

Matching: Paragraph 2³

8. **extravagant** h. The fact or condition of being responsible for something.
 9. **mansion** i. Taken as a whole; in all.
 10. **carbon footprint** j. A course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual.
 11. **overall** k. Lacking restraint in spending money or using resources.
 12. **policy** l. A large, impressive house.
 13. **corporate** m. Relating to a large company or group.
 14. **accountability** n. The amount of CO₂ released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular person or business.

Sources:

<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/07/world/billionaires-greenhouse-gases-climate-intl>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/07/super-richs-carbon-investmentemissions-equivalent-to-whole-of-france>

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2022/11/07/single-billionaire-produces-million-timesmore-emissions-average-person-oxfam>

Content questions: (find the answers inside the article)

1. How many billionaires did the report look at?
2. What country produces the same amount of CO₂ as the billionaires?
3. Where did the head of a charity speak?
4. What did a charity say billionaires have escaped from?

Content questions (multiple choice): (find the answers inside the article):

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2211/221110-super-rich-co2-emissions.html>

- 1) What does the article say cows do that damages the environment?
 - a) they break wind b) they belch c) they eat too much grass d) they have too many calves
- 2) What kind of organization made a report on billionaires and CO₂?
 - a) an accountancy company b) a school c) a government department d) a charity
- 3) How much more CO₂ does a billionaire create than an average person?
 - a) a hundred thousand times more b) a billion times more c) a million times more d) 10 thousand times more
- 4) What two kinds of transport do billionaires use that creates CO₂?
 - a) yachts and jets

³ Answers: 8k, 9l, 10n, 11i, 12j, 13m, 14h

- b) rockets and e-scooters
 - c) limousines and helicopters
 - d) trains and speed boats
- 5) What kind of carbon footprint do billionaires have?
- a) a green one b) a dirty one c) a huge one d) an old one
- 6) What did a charity say the billionaires were at the top of?
- a) the corporate pyramid b) their game c) the tree d) the rich list

DISCUSSION:

1. What causes the earth's temperature to naturally go up and down from season to season?
2. Can you name any other "natural" causes of climate change? (i.e., outside human influence)⁴
3. Discuss what damage each of these things do to the environment: volcanos, forest fires, cows,⁵ cars, trains, trucks, factories, mining to create batteries, generating electricity, billionaires, factory workers, students, you
4. How serious do you believe current rates of "climate change" to be? Explain.
5. Why is "climate change" more serious now than it was 100 years ago (or is it)?
6. How can we stop or slow the damage?

DEBATE (tax): Team-A strongly believe billionaires should pay a big tax for the damage they do to the environment; Team-B strongly believe not. (If there is time, debate another topic.)

If there is still time, talk about this thought from the Bible, in terms of human responsibility for our world: ⁸The LORD God had planted a garden in the east in Eden. ¹⁵The LORD God put the man [He had created] in the Garden of Eden. He put him there to farm its land and take care of it." (Gen 2, NIRV)

⁴ volcanos are huge; forest fires; hurricanes; el nino; drought; meteorites; sun-spots and other solar activity; the earth's weather patterns; shifting jet stream; etc

⁵ One 'cause' in China is methane from all the cows and pigs that people can now regularly afford, compared to the huge populations mostly vegetarian former diet; imagine if India had a similar sudden change in diet.