



The Degrowth Elephant

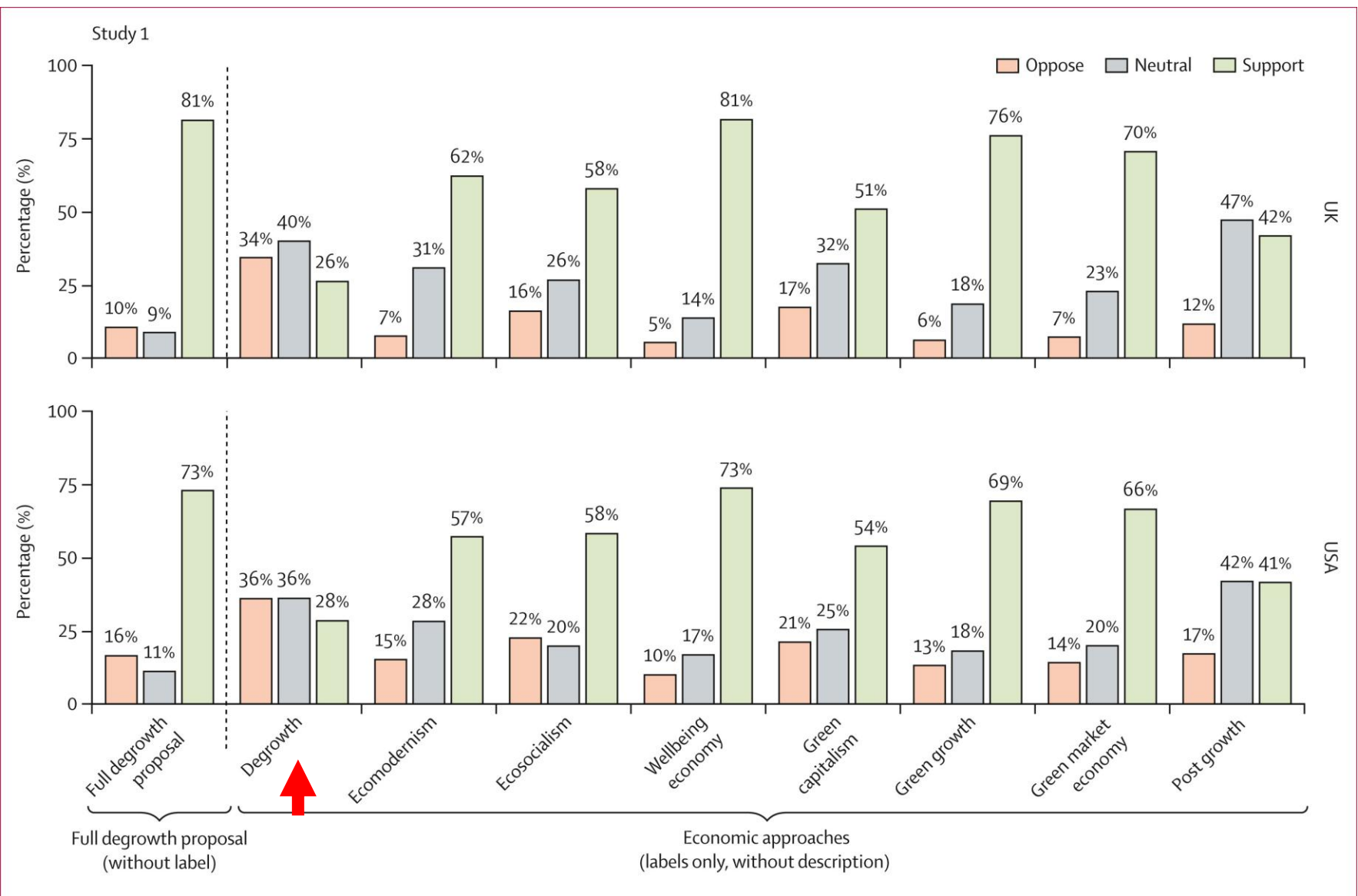
Why we must talk openly and widely
about degrowth in Canada

Vlad Bunea
4 March 2026

- 5 quantitative questions about degrowth
 - How popular is degrowth?
 - How does degrowth relate to the overshoot problem?
 - How does degrowth relate to unequal exchange and Global North – Global South relations?
 - How does degrowth relate to wealth and income inequality?
 - How does degrowth relate to rationing?
- 5 qualitative questions about degrowth
 - How is degrowth actually perceived?
 - How does degrowth respond to growth dependencies and incentives (GDIs)?
 - Is degrowth about changing lifestyles or changing the “system”?
 - Why “degrowth” and not something else? (e.g. post-growth, wellbeing economics, circular economy, doughnut economics)
 - Can degrowth actually phase out capitalism and phase in... something else?
- 5 prefigurative statements
 - We should normalize the ethics of limits
 - We should normalize the ethics of many forms of democracy (e.g. sortition, sociocracy)
 - We should be honest about colonial and imperial legacy
 - We should normalize alternatives to growth dependencies
 - We should construct the ethics of a New Economy collectively and democratically

Quantitative question #1:

How popular is degrowth?

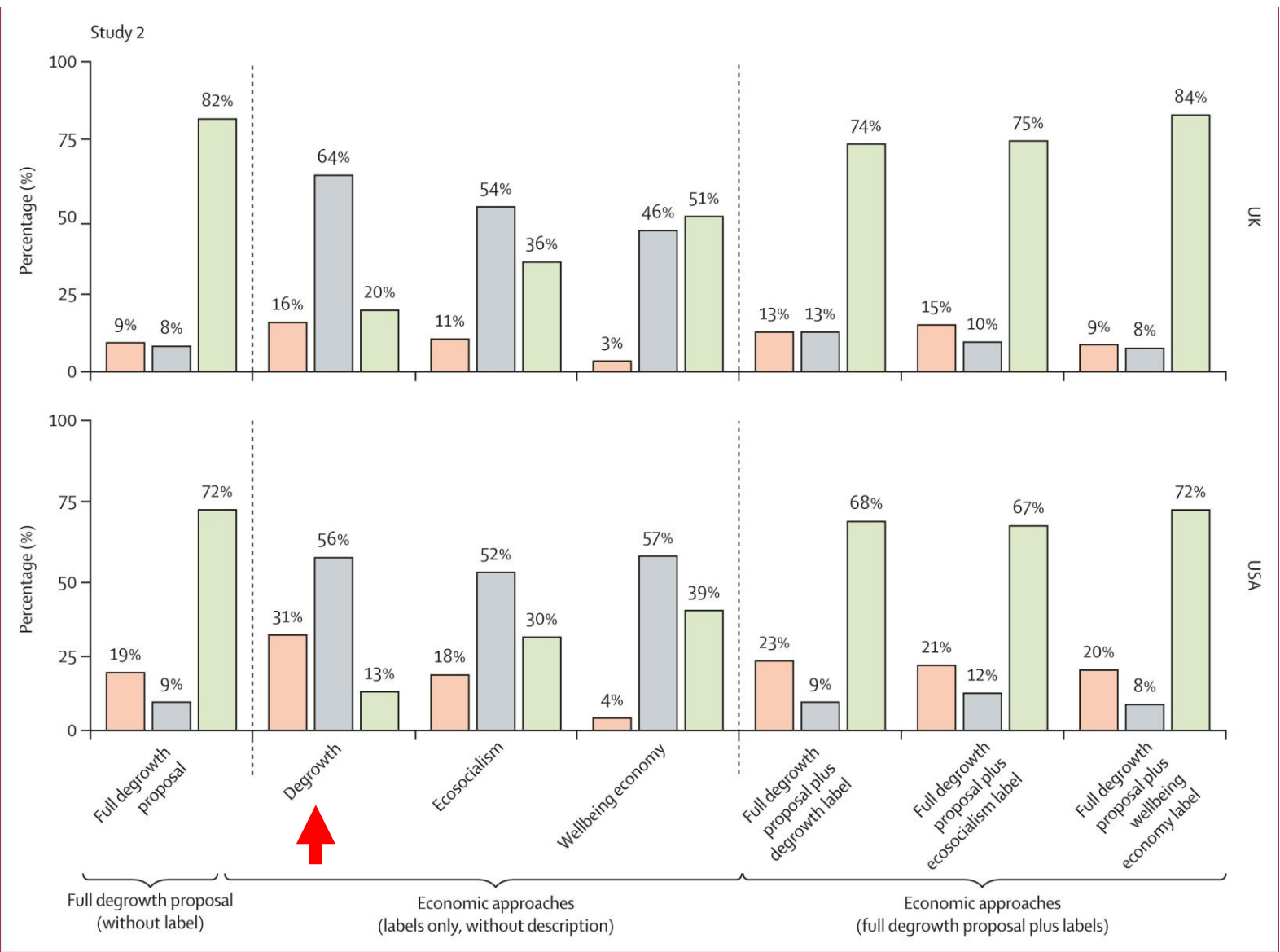


Assessing public support for degrowth: survey-based experimental and predictive studies
Dario Krpan, Frédéric Basso, Jason E Hickel, Giorgos Kallis
Lancet Planet Health 2025; 9: 101326

Figure 2: Percentage breakdown of support for degrowth and other synonymous or related economic approaches in UK and US participants representative of the respective populations by age, gender, and ethnicity (Studies 1 and 2)

Quantitative question #1:

How popular is degrowth?



Assessing public support for degrowth: survey-based experimental and predictive studies
Dario Krpan, Frédéric Basso, Jason E Hickel, Giorgos Kallis
Lancet Planet Health 2025; 9: 101326

Figure 2: Percentage breakdown of support for degrowth and other synonymous or related economic approaches in UK and US participants representative of the respective populations by age, gender, and ethnicity (Studies 1 and 2)

Quantitative question #2:

How does degrowth relate to the overshoot problem?

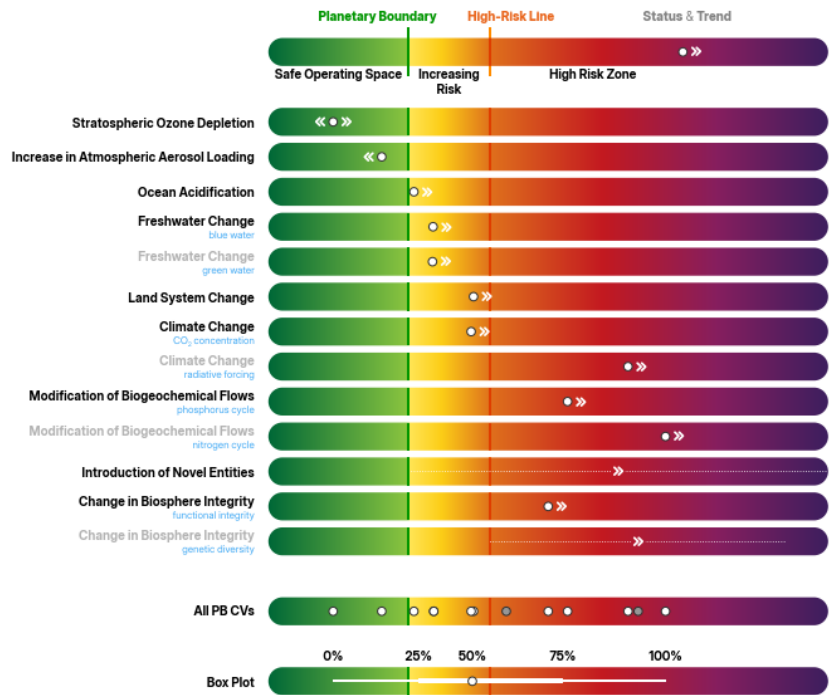
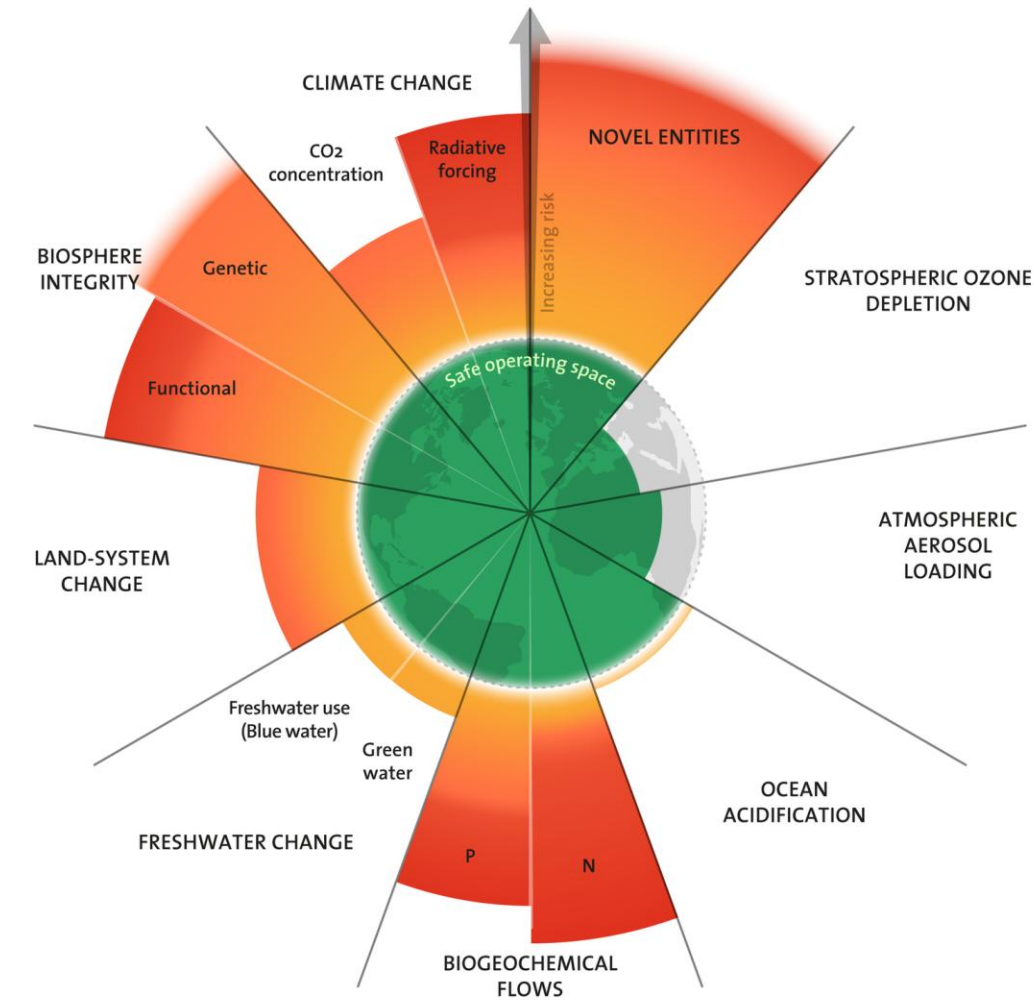


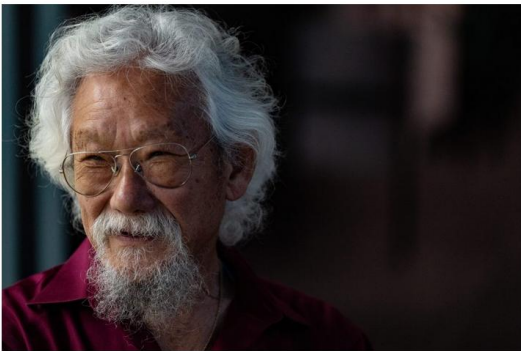
FIGURE ES 1 - Planetary Health at a glance. Just as a blood test provides insights into a human body's health and identifies areas of concern, this Planetary Health Check evaluates the 13 measured control variables across the 9 Planetary Boundary (PB) processes to report on Earth's stability, resilience, and life-support functions – the overall health of our planet. The 2025 assessment shows that seven of the nine PBs have been breached: **Climate Change, Change in Biosphere Integrity, Land System Change, Freshwater Change, Modification of Biogeochemical Flows, Introduction of Novel Entities, and Ocean Acidification.** All of these show increasing trends, suggesting further deterioration in the near future. Two PB processes remain within the Safe Operating Space: **Increase in Atmospheric Aerosol Loading** (improving global trend) and **Stratospheric Ozone Depletion** (currently stable). The Planetary Health Check Symbol (Fig. ES 2) summarizes all of these findings, showing the Planet's overall health at a glance.

'It's too late': David Suzuki says the fight against climate change is lost

"We have failed to shift the narrative and we are still caught up in the same legal, economic and political systems," said David Suzuki in an exclusive interview with iPolitics. "For me, what we've got to do now is hunker down."

Published July 2nd, 2025 at 2:46pm

David Legree
Reporter

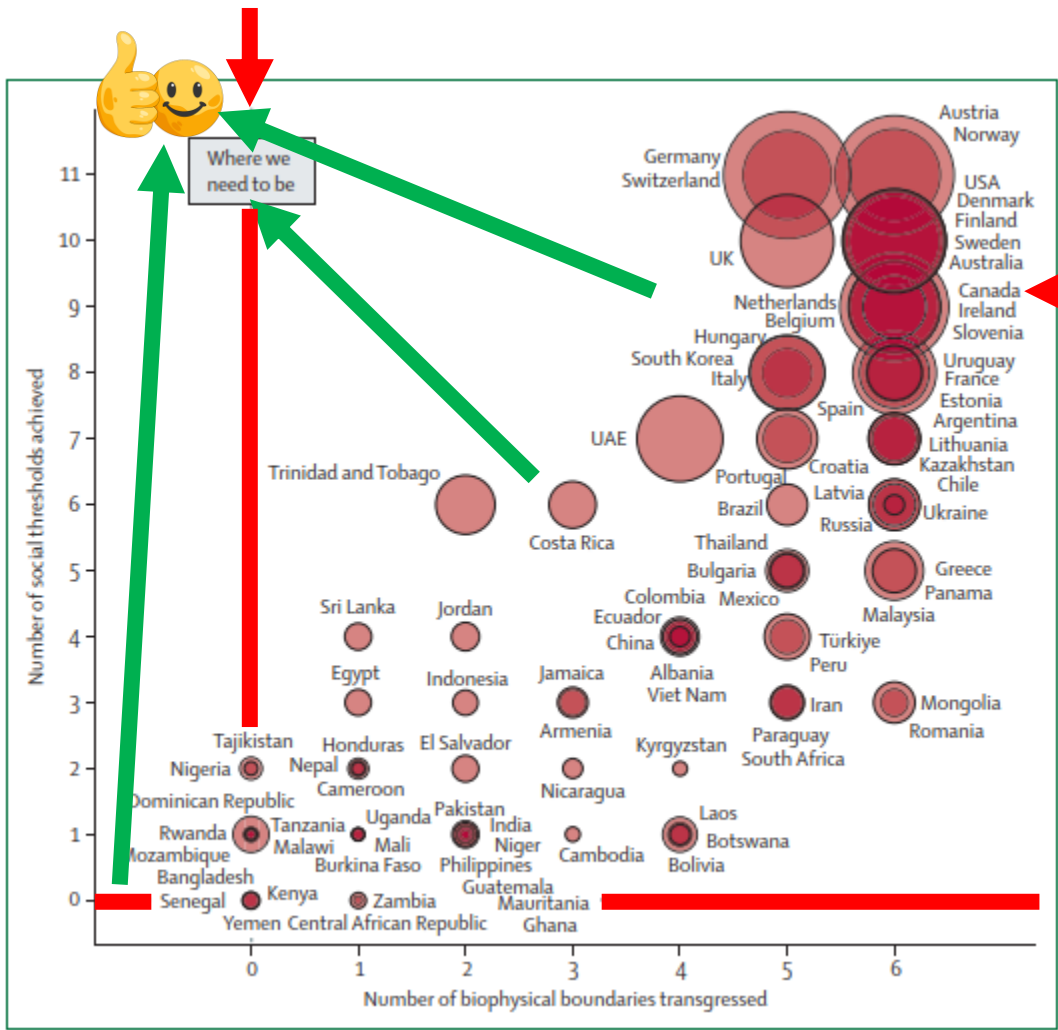


David Suzuki is pictured during an interview with The Canadian Press, in Montreal, Thursday, Sept. 19, 2024. The David Suzuki Foundation collaborated with a new immersive exhibit, called Root for Nature. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Christine Muschi



Quantitative question #2:

How does degrowth relate to the overshoot problem?



Number of social thresholds achieved versus number of biophysical boundaries transgressed for 92 countries in 2015, scaled by per capita GDP. Ideally, countries would be located in the top-left corner, where no country currently is. Currently, high-income countries achieve social goals, but at the expense of crossing planetary boundaries. Social and biophysical data are from Fanning et al (2022) and per capita GDP data (measured in 2015 US\$) are from the World Bank (2022). The 11 social thresholds are for life satisfaction, life expectancy, nutrition, sanitation, income poverty, access to energy, secondary education, social support, democratic quality, equality, and employment. The six biophysical boundaries are for CO2 emissions, phosphorus, nitrogen, land-system change, ecological footprint, and material footprint (2025). GDP=gross domestic product.

Ocean acidification, the 7th boundary, was crossed in 2025.

Quantitative question #2:

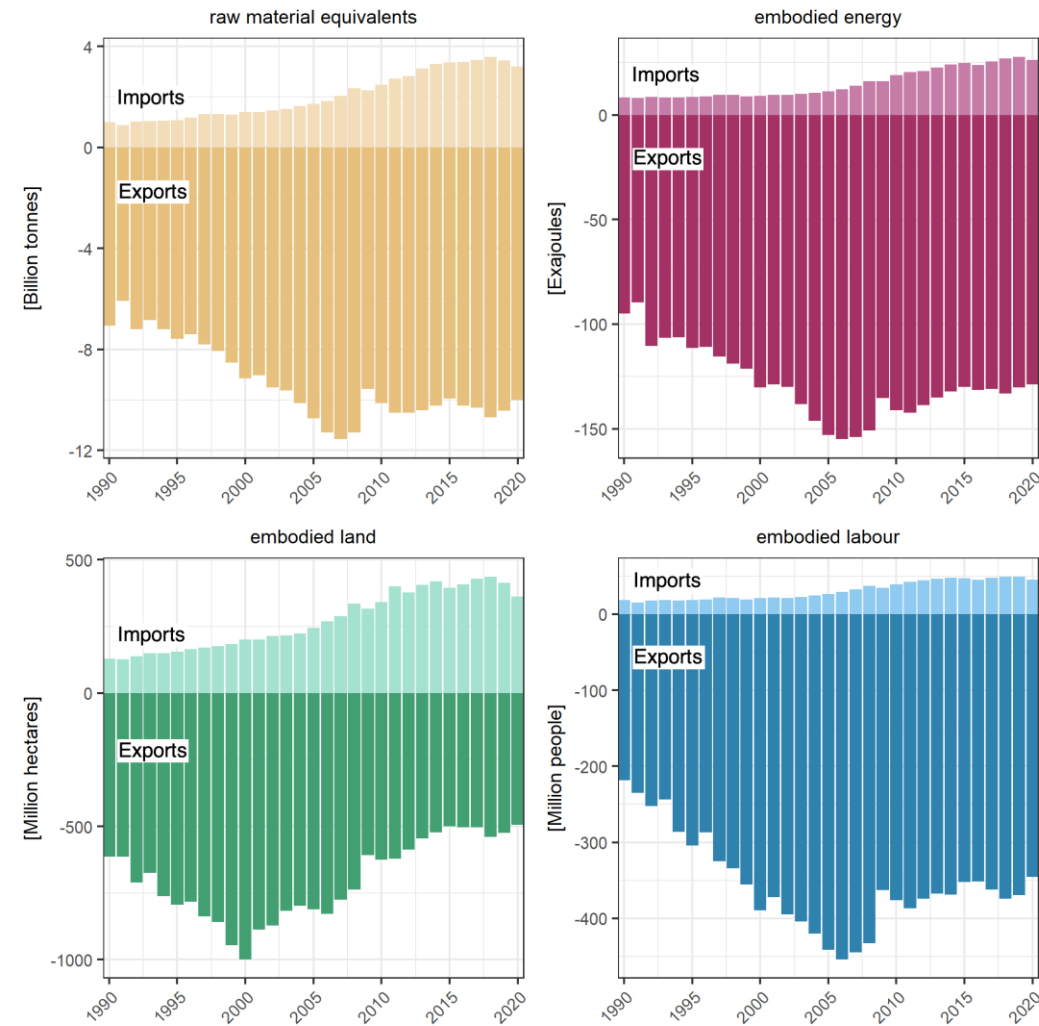
How does degrowth relate to the overshoot problem?

	Description	Advocates' case for	Concerns or points of debate
Universal basic income	A monthly income guaranteed to all residents for life, without any requirement	Compensates for unpaid care work; reduces inequalities; enables people to engage in non-wage creative activities; decouples survival from employment; removes stigma and bureaucracy associated with conventional benefit systems	If funded by tax on income or resources, universal basic income might create a dependency on growth to fund it; it might suppress wages or increase rents, as business owners pay less and property owners charge more in the knowledge that workers receive the basic income; environmental pressure might rebound if income is spent on material consumption
Working-time reduction	Reduction of statutory hours of work per week or year	Ensures high employment in the absence of growth; confers wellbeing and health benefits; reduces environmental pressures; redistributes productivity gains to labour	Might reduce purchasing power for workers if hourly pay remains constant (this is not the case, however, for proposals for working time reduction with constant monthly wage); might result in rebounding environmental impacts if free time is used in resource-intensive ways; might increase unemployment if rising labour costs encourage firms to adopt labour-saving strategies
Universal basic services	Guaranteed access to health care, education, housing, transit, food, and care services for all, without (or with only partly) having to pay for them	Secures minimum conditions for decent living regardless of fluctuations in aggregate output; reduces poverty; redistributes access to services; reduces inequalities	Access to some services (eg, food and housing) might need means-testing, which can create stigma and could create incentives for people to remain insecure to retain access to these services
Job guarantee	All residents are guaranteed access to training and employment in essential public works	Eliminates involuntary unemployment; reduces poverty and exclusion; can be used to direct labour toward socially and environmentally beneficial activities; can be used to set good labour standards and wages across the whole economy	Limited public ownership of means of production constrains the possibility of redirecting the economy through public works; in some countries, the state might have insufficient legitimacy to restructure the economy and it might be unpopular to work for the state; higher wages could prompt labour-saving strategies by capital; higher wages could stimulate more growth
Maximum income	A maximum permissible total income or a maximum wage differential within an organisation, or society as a whole	Limits inequalities; reduces the excess purchasing power of the rich; reduces unnecessary production and consumption; reduces ecological impacts	Tax evasion; outmigration of high-paid professionals
Wealth tax	Progressive annual tax on asset holdings above a certain threshold	Reduces inequalities; distributes wealth more equitably; can be used to fund social and ecological policies	Tax evasion; wealth and capital flight
Public money	Creation of money by the state to spend on social and environmental initiatives; credit policy and taxation are used to reduce excess demand to control inflation	Increases fiscal possibilities; facilitates debt-free money that does not require growth to be repaid	Power can be misused to pay for socially and environmentally detrimental projects; might be politically difficult to tax money out of circulation to reduce inflation
Replacing GDP	Replace GDP with wellbeing and sustainability indicators	Removes distorting role of GDP, which is a poor measure of wellbeing; directs policy to wellbeing and sustainability goals	Absence of powerful epistemic community to support alternative indicators; GDP accounting entrenched in institutional structures
Cap and adapt	Cap and phase out fossil fuels, rationing fossil fuel use per country	Direct reduction of emissions; equitable sharing of mitigation	Monitoring and enforcement; unlikely to reach more binding international agreement
Green New Deal	Public investment programme on the order of 5% of GDP to achieve a just climate transition, coupled with social policies	Fast mobilisation of resources for climate mitigation; social justice and reduction of inequalities	Cost, and pressure for growth to pay back investments; environmental injustice against regions where raw materials are extracted from
Carbon taxes or dividends	Tax carbon (including on imported goods) and return revenue as a universal dividend	Incentivises a shift away from carbon-intensive activities; avoids distributional consequences and conflict	Needs to be very high to have a real effect; few substitution possibilities for many carbon-intensive activities; has lost political momentum
A summary of the main arguments made by advocates of these policies, alongside their most pertinent critiques. Advocates have defended proposals against such critiques; we see these debates as open and marking frontiers for new research.			
Table: Post-growth-oriented policies			



Quantitative question #3:

How does degrowth relate to unequal exchange and Global North – Global South relations?



- In 2022, after excluding productivity gaps, unequal exchange (expressed in monetary terms) amounted to a gain of US\$ 3.1 trillion for the economies of the centre (equivalent to 27% of their combined Domestic Value Added, DVA) and a loss of US\$ 1.7 trillion for the periphery (108%).
- When productivity gaps are included, the centre's (Global North) gain rises to US\$ 8.8 trillion (76%), while the periphery (Global South) loses US\$ 6.9 trillion – equivalent to a staggering 440% of DVA.

Crelis Rammelt (05 Nov 2025): Two Sides of the Same Coin: A Synthesis of Economic and Ecological Unequal Exchange, Capitalism Nature Socialism

Domestic value added (DVA) refers to the value that an economy contributes to the production of goods and services for export, calculated as the difference between the total output value and the intermediate consumption costs. It represents the economic value generated within a country from its production activities.

Quantitative question #3:

How does degrowth relate to unequal exchange and Global North – Global South relations?

Mining disaster in Congo sparks accusations of Rwandan looting

GEOFFREY YORK > AFRICA BUREAU CHIEF

JOHANNESBURG

PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 1, 2026



A labourer at the Rubaya coltan mine, which is controlled by M23 rebels, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, in March, 2025.

ZOHRA BENSEMRA/REUTERS

Ndongo Samba Sylla, Kai Koddenbrock (eds.)

Delinking and Global Reparations

Alternative Perspectives on
the Socio-Ecological Crisis

[transcript] Global Studies

The Dakar Declaration 2022

- Delinking and decolonization
- Debt jubilees
- Net transfers from core (Global North) to periphery (Global South)
- Reparations

Quantitative question #4:

How does degrowth respond to wealth and income inequality?

OXFAM CANADA

THE RISE OF THE SUPER-RICH

THE STATE OF INEQUALITY IN CANADA



- The top 0.01 percent of wealth holders in Canada is made up of approximately 1,800 families that hold more than five percent of all wealth in Canada – totaling nearly \$900B. To fall within this elite group requires a net-worth of more than \$170M.
- The top 0.1 percent of wealth holders in Canada hold more than 11 percent of all wealth in Canada – their combined net-worth is more than \$1.8 trillion. To fall within this group requires a net-worth of at least \$36M.
- The top 0.5 percent of wealth holders in Canada hold almost 20 percent of all wealth in Canada. To fall within this group requires a net-worth of almost \$12M.
- The top 1 percent of wealth holders in Canada hold almost a quarter of all wealth in Canada. To fall within this group requires a net-worth upwards of \$7M.
- In contrast, the bottom 40 percent of wealth holders collectively hold just over 3 percent of total wealth in Canada, each holding an average net-worth of just under \$87,000.

Quantitative question #4:

How does degrowth respond to wealth and income inequality?



Quantitative question #5:

How does degrowth relate to rationing?

TABLE 4.1 Income classes, carbon footprints, and income thresholds (the data sources are indicated in square brackets and listed in the footnote)*

	Ultrarich over-consuming (richest 1%)	Over-consuming (richest 10%)	Consuming (18%)		Sufficiency (40%)	Struggling (32%)	
			Rich countries (6%)	China, India, and other regions of the world (12%)		Rich countries (1%)	China, India, and other regions of the world (31%)
Carbon footprint tCO ₂ e/ person per year	Non-country specific: 200–320 [2] 64.7 [5] US (richest 2%): 53.5 [1] EU (richest 1%): 55 [6]	Average: 18 [3] US: 50 [3] Canada: 30 [3] EU: 15–48 (average 23) [6]	Average: 7 [2]		–5 Basic needs met, not causing excessive CO ₂ emissions	Small to moderate	Very small [4]
Income threshold EUR/cap/ year	220 000 [2]	North Am&EU: 14 000 China: 6700 India: 14 000 [4]	North Am&EU: 6000 [4]	India: 5600 China: 2700 [4]	700–6000 [4]	Deprivation of a decent life, may be due to homelessness, unemployment, inadequate access to healthcare	<700 [4]

* Data sources: [1] Ummel (2014); [2] Chancel and Piketty (2015); [3] Oxfam (2015); [4] Ulvila and Wilén (2017); [5] Otto et al. (2019); [6] Ivanova and Wood (2020)



Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte also known as **Kotte**, the capital city of Sri Lanka.

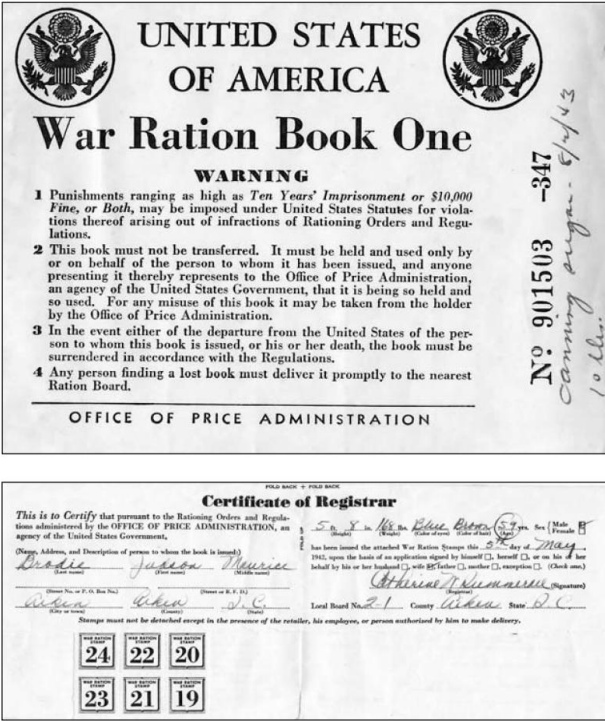
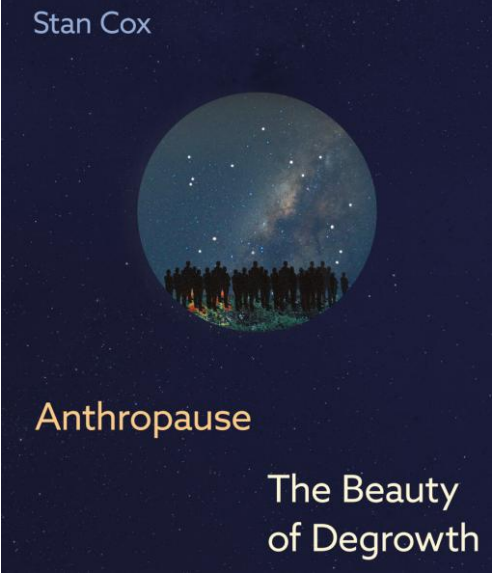
Paraguay, Nicaragua, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka have footprints around 0.3 tCO₂e/capita per year, and Albania, Costa Rica, and Egypt have footprints around 0.5 tCO₂e/capita per year.

Canada is at 13,4 tCO₂ tCO₂e/capita per year.

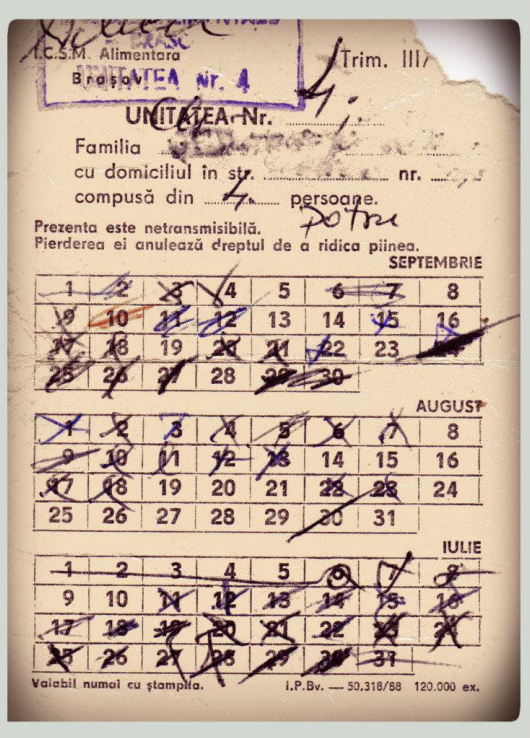
Quantitative question #5:

How does degrowth relate to rationing?

Hotspot \ Income class	Ultrarich over-consuming (richest 1%)	Over-consuming (richest 10%)	Consuming (18%)		Sufficiency (40%)	Struggling (32%)	
			Rich countries (6%)	China, India, and other regions of the world (12%)		Rich countries (1%)	China, India, and other regions of the world (31%)
Air travel							
Footprint (tCO ₂ e/person per year)	US: 33 [6], 35 [4] EU: 23 [7]	US: 6 [1], 0.5–8 [5] EU: 3 [7]	EU: <0.1 [7]		Negligible [7]	–	–
Proposal	Minimum 90% reduction	75–90% reduction	Minor reduction. Do not increase or start flying, keep traveling by land		Do not start flying, keep traveling by land.	Policy: Improve affordable access to public transport	Policy: Enable access to needs-based travel
Private car							
Footprint (tCO ₂ e/person per year)	5–12 US: 5 [6], 10 [4] EU: 12 [7]	5–7 US: 5 [2] EU: 7 [7]	2–3 [4,7]	1–2 China: 1 [8] India: 2 [8]	<1–2 US: 2 [2] EU: <1 [7] China: 0.7 [8] India: 1.5 [8]	–	–
Proposal	75–90% reduction	75–90% reduction	50% reduction	50% reduction	Keep living car-free or driving very moderately	Policy: Improve affordable access to public transport	Policy: Enable access to public transport
Meat							
Footprint (tCO ₂ e/person per year)	10 [4]	1–3 US: 1 [1], 2.5 [9] Canada: 3 [9] EU: 1 [9]	0.5–1.5 US & Canada: 1.5 [9] EU: 0.5–1 [9]	<0.5–1 China: 0.5–1 [9] India: <0.5 [9]	0–1 US: 0.5 [9], 1 [1] EU: 0.5 [9] China: 0.5 [9] India: 0–0.5 [9]	0–0.5 [9]	0–0.5 [9]
Proposal	75–90% reduction for high-meat diet	50% reduction	Minor to 50% reduction	Minor reduction	No or minor reduction	Policy: Enable access to predominantly vegetarian or vegan food which fulfills nutritional requirements	Policy: Enable access to predominantly vegetarian or vegan food which fulfills nutritional requirements



A ration book issued by the U.S. government, with stamps, 1943.



Sufficiency. From Growth and Overshoot to Enoughness
(Edited by Toni Ruuska, Tina Nyfors), 2026

Qualitative question #1:

How is degrowth actually perceived?

- The negativity of degrowth (don't say it, focus on the “positive”)
- The technicality of degrowth (it's academic, it's jargony)
- The politics of degrowth (electability, alignment with the *status quo*)



Qualitative question #1:

How is degrowth actually perceived?

- The negativity of degrowth (don't say it, focus on the “positive”)
- The technicality of degrowth (it's academic, it's jargony)
- The politics of degrowth (electability, alignment with the *status quo*)

Hidden Motives in Everyday Life

THE ELEPHANT

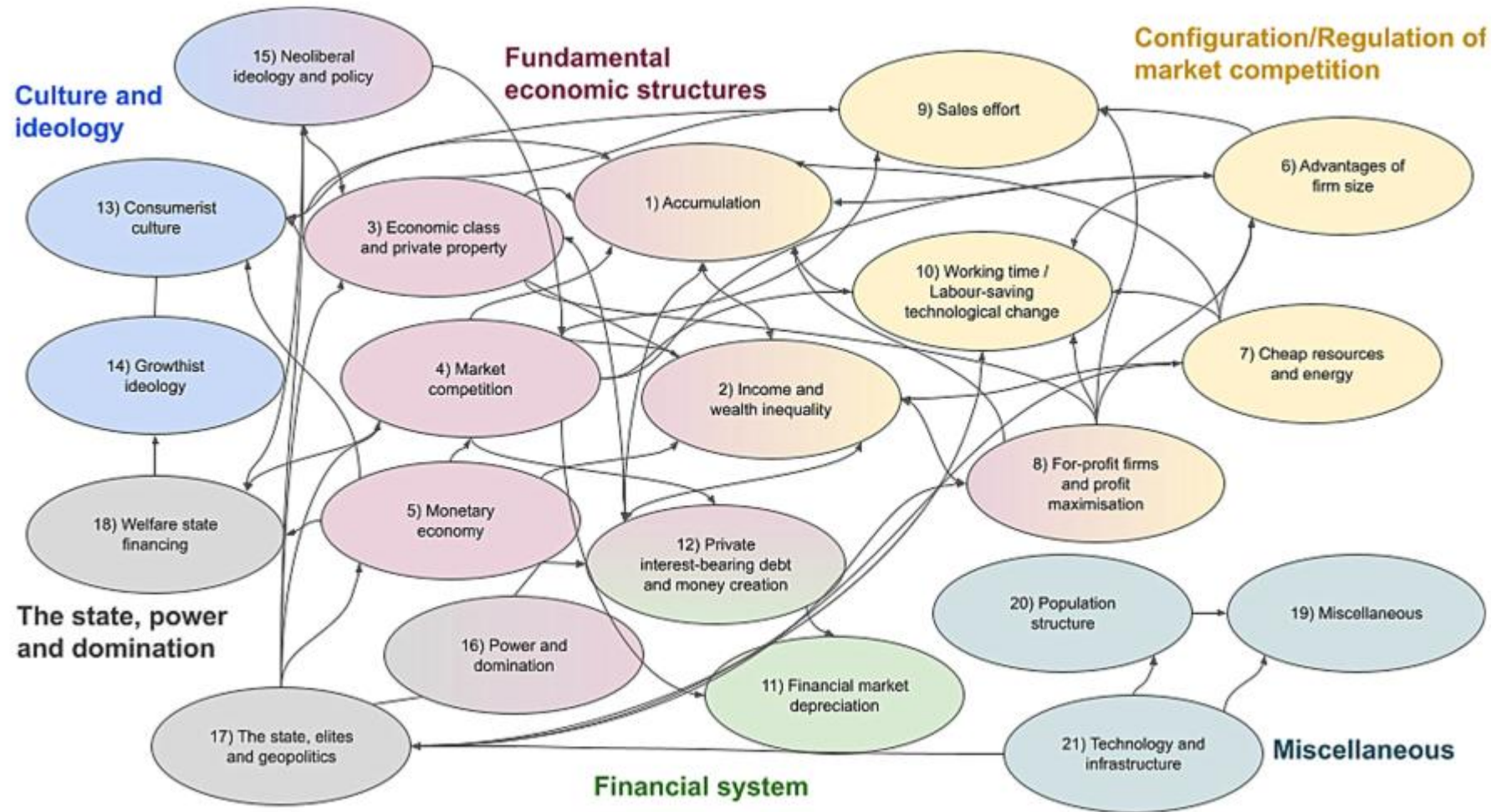


IN THE BRAIN

KEVIN SIMLER ROBIN HANSON

Qualitative question #2:

How does degrowth respond to growth dependencies and incentives (GDIs)?



Qualitative question #3: Is degrowth about changing lifestyles or changing the “system”?

Yes, and...

Jan Swasthya Abhiyan has expressed solidarity with India's February 12 national strike, warning that proposed labor reforms threaten workers' health and rights. (February 13, 2026 Peoples Health Dispatch)

Vlad Bunea, various protests
2022-23, Toronto



Qualitative question #4:

Why “degrowth” and not something else? (e.g. post-growth, wellbeing economics, circular economy, doughnut economics)

- disentangle degrowth from wellbeing economy
- post growth as a political tactic
- doughnut economics, circular economy do not challenge the structures of capitalism directly

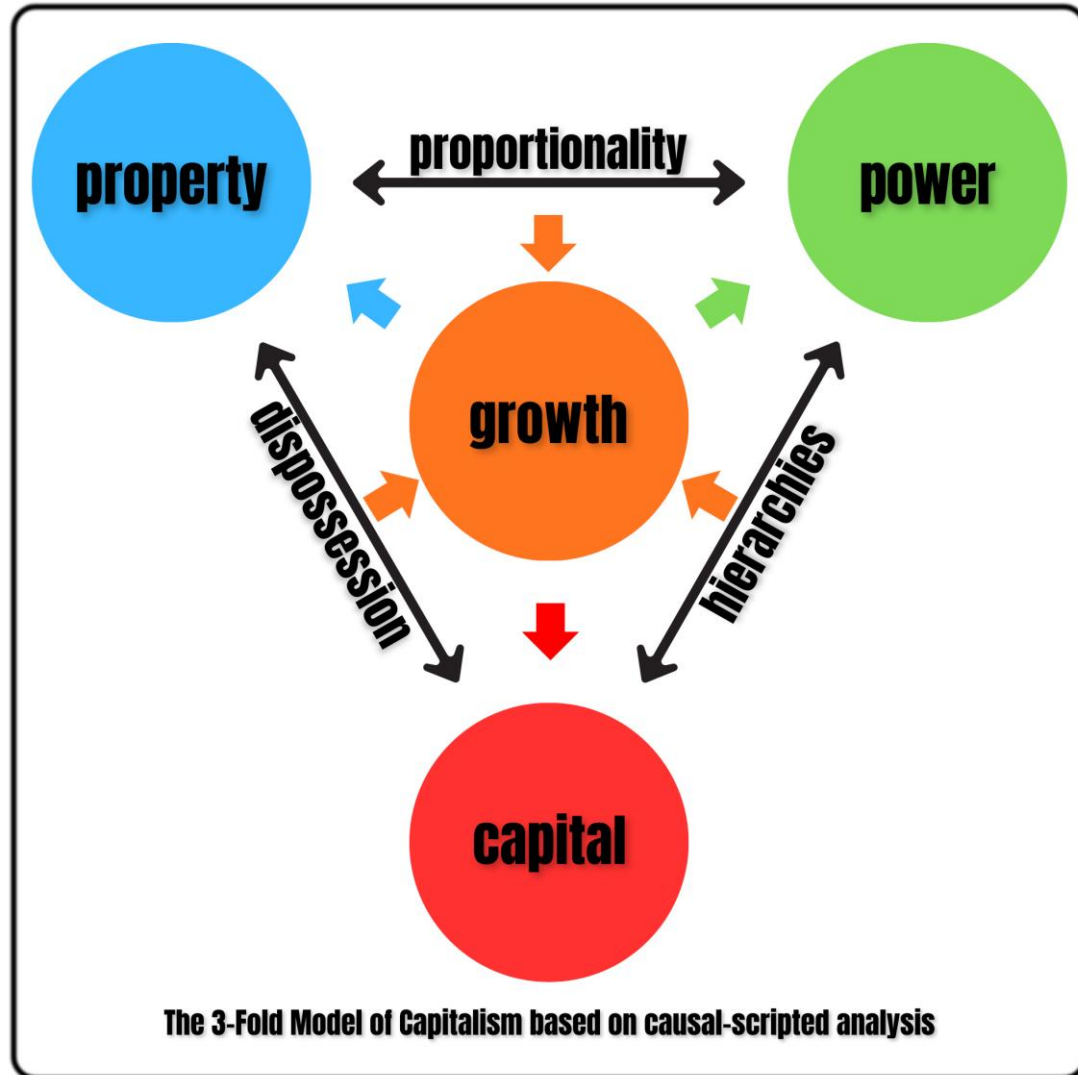


Qualitative question #5:

Can degrowth actually phase out capitalism and phase in... something else?

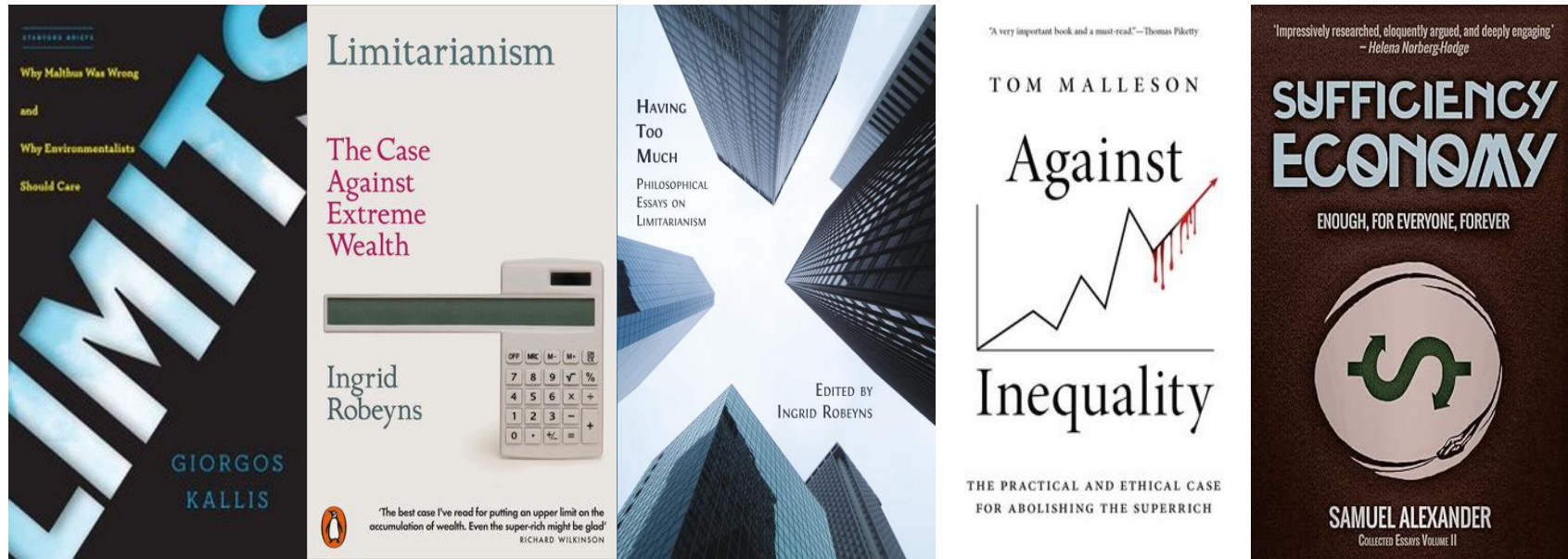
The 3-Fold definition of capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system where (1) the realm of property is linked to the realm of power by the doctrine of proportionality, (2) the realm of power is linked to the realm of capital by the doctrine of hierarchies, and (3) the realm of capital is linked to the realm of property by the doctrine of dispossession, while the growth incentive catalyses all economic interactions.



Prefigurative statement #1:

We should normalize the ethics of limits



ARTICLE PERSPECTIVES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

How Much (More) Should CEOs Make? A Universal Desire for More Equal Pay

By: Sorapop Kiatpongsan and [Michael I. Norton](#)

Format: Print

[Email](#) [Print](#) [Share](#)

ABSTRACT

Do people from different countries and different backgrounds have similar preferences for how much more the rich should earn than the poor? Using survey data from 40 countries (N = 55,238), we compare respondents' estimates of the wages of people in different occupations—chief executive officers, cabinet ministers, and unskilled workers—to their ideals for what those wages should be. We show that ideal pay gaps between skilled and unskilled workers are significantly smaller than estimated pay gaps, and that there is consensus across countries, socioeconomic status, and political beliefs for ideal pay ratios. Moreover, data from 16 countries reveals that people dramatically underestimate actual pay inequality. In the United States—where underestimation was particularly pronounced—the actual pay ratio of CEOs to unskilled workers (354:1) far exceeded the estimated ratio (30:1), which in turn far exceeded the ideal ratio (7:1). In sum, respondents underestimate actual pay gaps, and their ideal pay gaps are even further from reality than those underestimates.

KEYWORDS

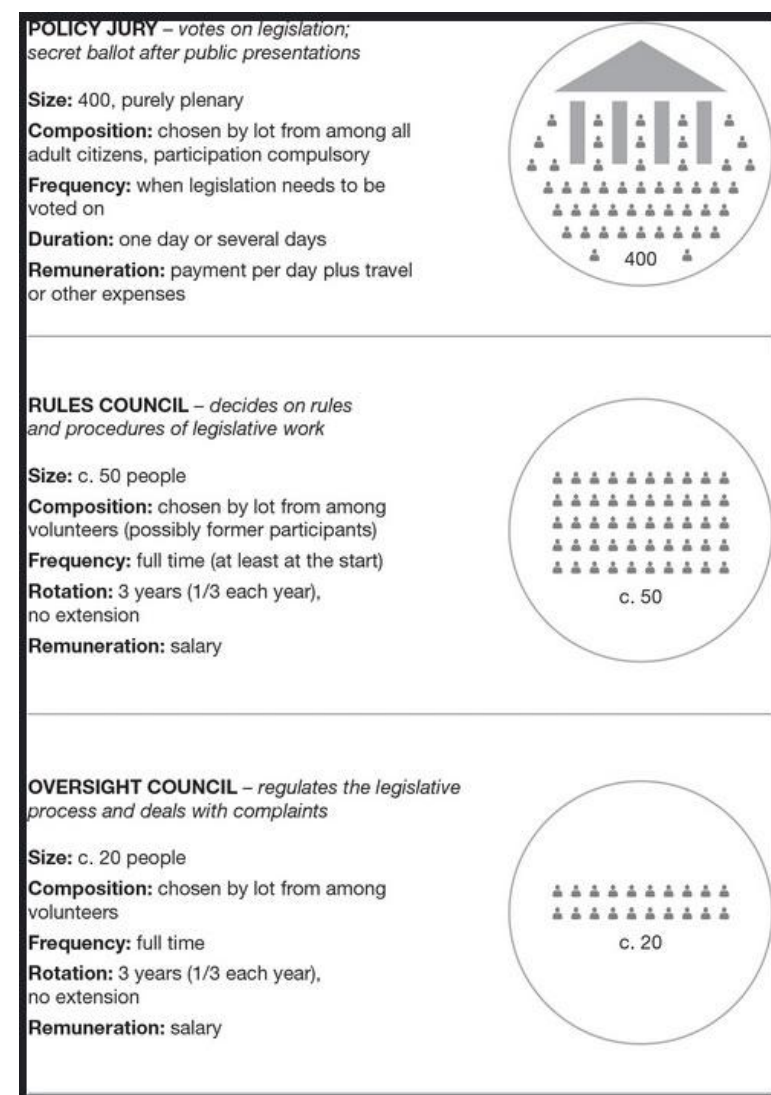
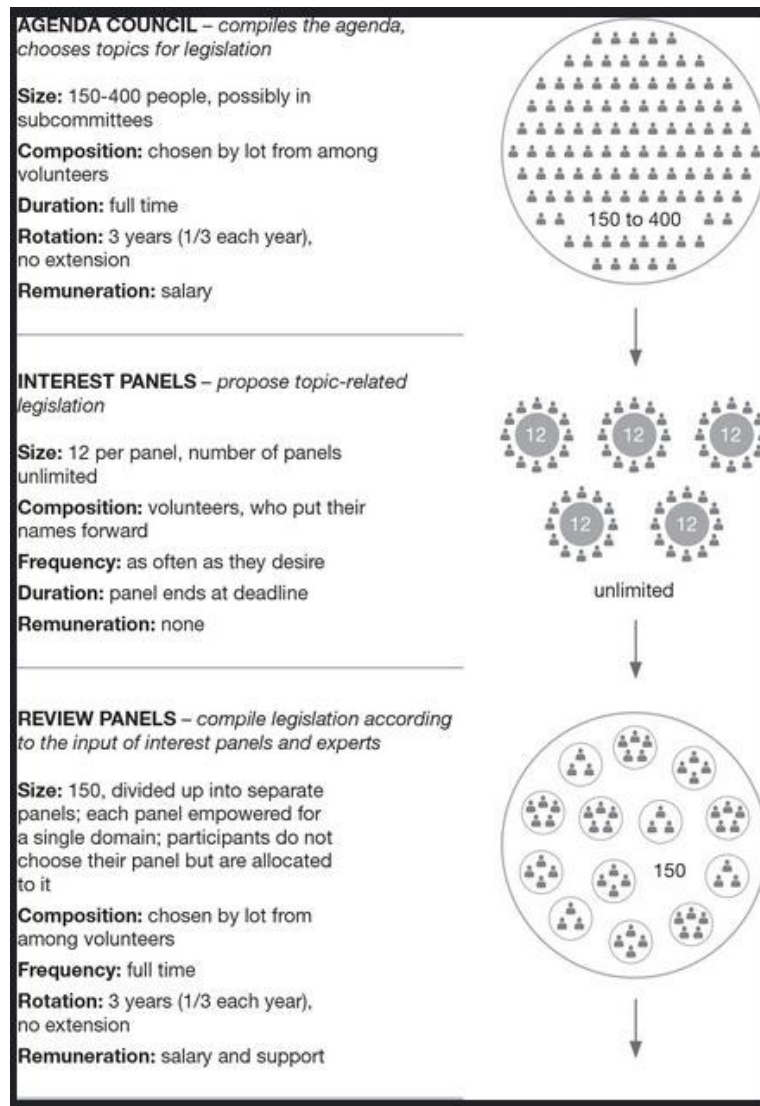
[Inequality](#); [Justice](#); [Wage](#); [Cross-cultural](#); [Wages](#); [Equality and Inequality](#); [Fairness](#); [Income](#); [Employees](#); [Management Teams](#); [Cross-Cultural and Cross-Border Issues](#)

CITATION

Kiatpongsan, Sorapop, and Michael I. Norton. "How Much (More) Should CEOs Make? A Universal Desire for More Equal Pay." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 9, no. 6 (November 2014): 587–593.

Prefigurative statement #2: We should normalize the ethics of many forms of democracy (e.g. sortition, sociocracy)

- The Bouricius model
- Qualified random selection
- Sociocracy wherever possible (decision by consent)
- Stakeholders must also share the power of their own governance



Prefigurative statement #3:

We should be honest about colonial and imperial legacy

HOME

FEATURED MAPS

DONATE

ABOUT

IMPACT

RESOURCES

COLLABORATE

LOGIN →

EN ▾

Global Atlas of Environmental Justice

»

EJAtlas - Global Atlas of Environmental Justice

354 cases have been filtered

Search

Q

The EJAtlas is a work in progress. Newly documented cases and information are continuously added to the platform. However, many are still undocumented and new ones arise. Please note that the absence of data does not indicate the absence of conflict.

Filters

Country ... ▾

= ▾

Canada

+

APPLY

CLEAR

> Legend

> Browse Maps

> Newly published featured maps

> Recently updated conflicts

Highland Copper's contested Copperwood Project mine proposal in the Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan, USA.

Environmental groups are objecting to the mine's waste creation—during its 10.7 year existence, 30 million tons of waste could be created near Lake Superior and Michigan's old growth forests. Indigenous communities are...

Koa-Gas movement against gas drilling, Bavaria, Germany

As of December 2025, exploratory drilling for natural gas is underway in Reichling, southwest of Munich. If successful and economic viable, investors might develop additional gas wells in the region. There is...

United States Military Waste from the Cold War (the DEW line). Greenland

Almost 30 years after the end of the Cold War, the United States has yet to clean up the mess they made in Greenland during the war. Indigenous Inuit communities are concerned about the health impacts they could suffer...

Industrial Development Plans near the Leaning Church in the post-coal region of Karviná. Czech Republic.

Proposed Panattoni "Smart Park" industrial zone vs. protection of Stará

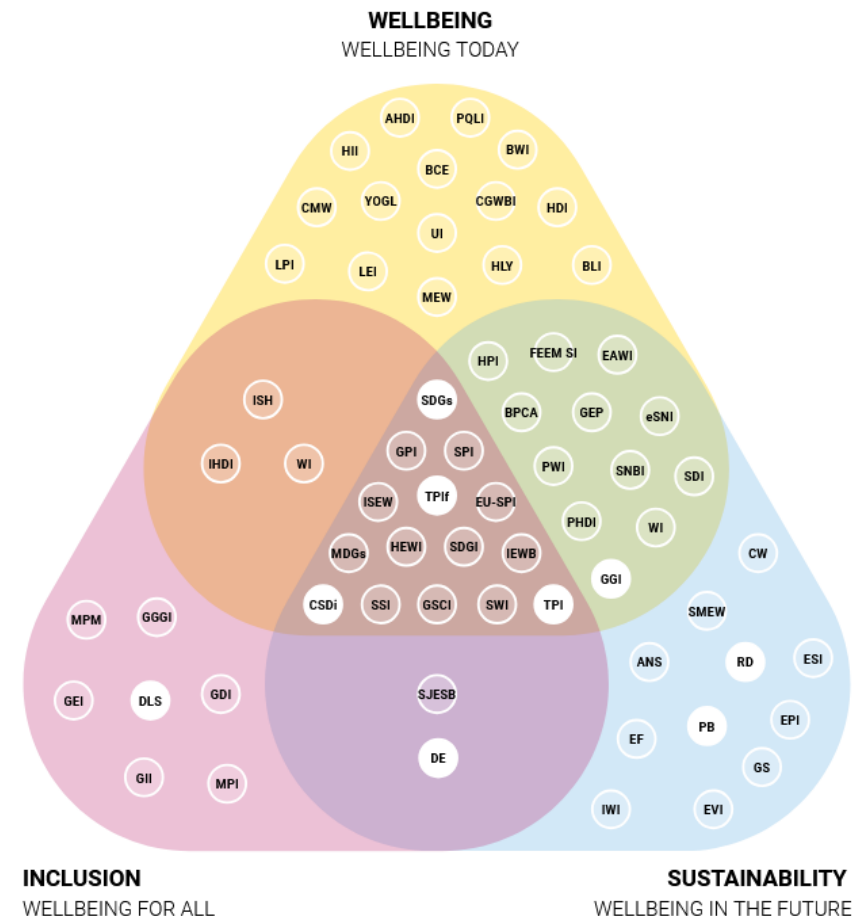
ACKNOWLEDGE EJ

Prefigurative statement #4:

We should normalize alternatives to growth dependencies and incentives

- Sufficiency and wellbeing
- Public policy should not chase growth dependencies and incentives
- Private economic agents should operate *as if* public policy was already designed without growth dependencies and incentives

The “WISE triangle” below shows dozens of Beyond-GDP metrics which have been proposed in the past decades. Only measurement systems that have been proposed at the national level have been included (not city, regional, business or investment metrics). By clicking on one of the circles you can see further information about each Beyond-GDP metric.



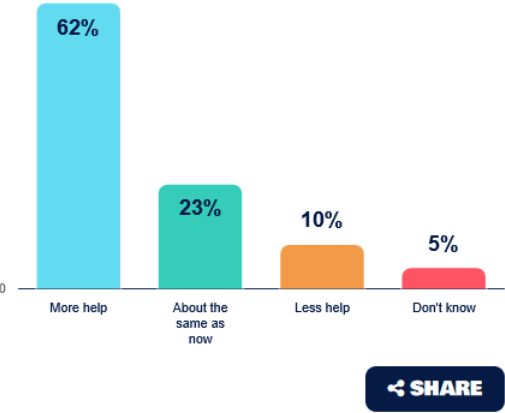
Prefigurative statement #5:

We should construct the ethics of a New Economy collectively and democratically

- A mass campaign of citizen assemblies
- Limits on income and wealth
- Rationing of resources

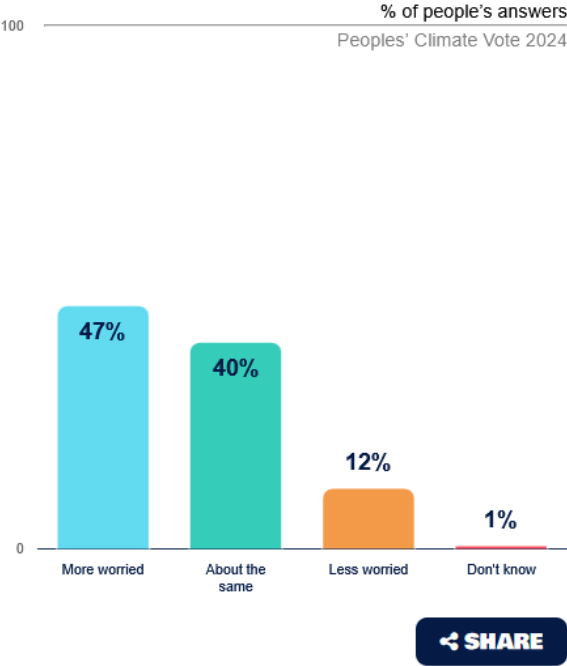


2024 survey, results for Canada



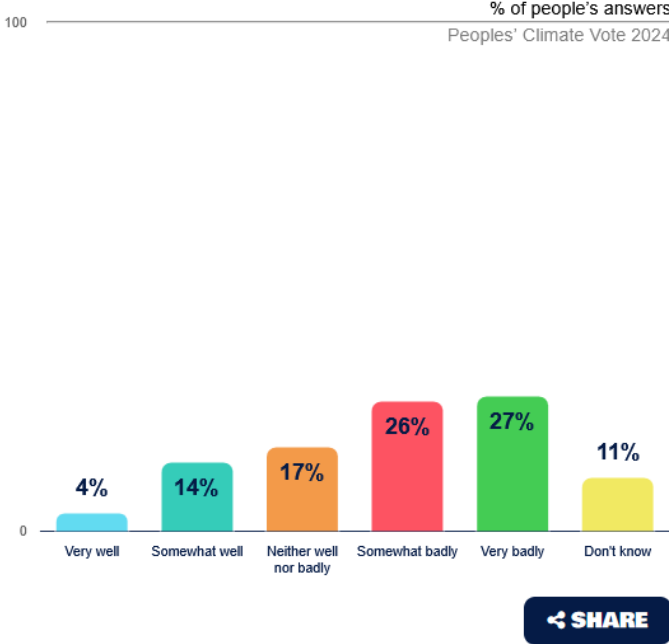
Should rich countries give more or less help to poorer countries to address climate change?

Poorer countries need more money to adapt to the impacts of climate change because they do not have the same levels of infrastructure or resources as richer countries. We asked if richer countries should do more.



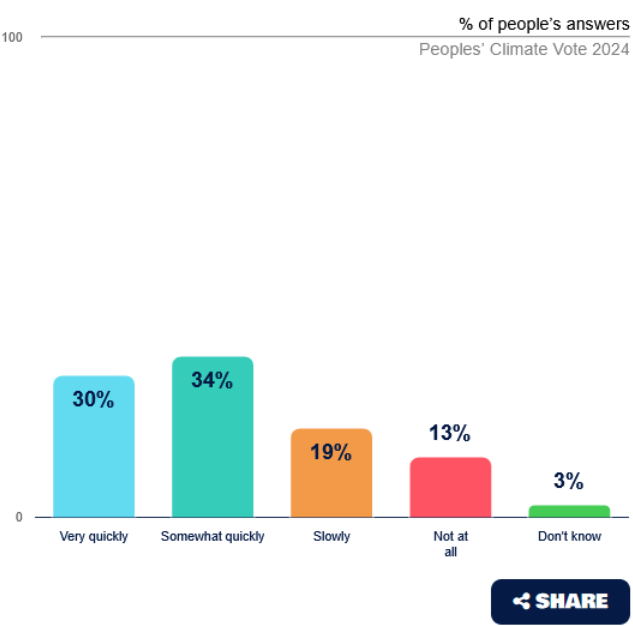
Compared with last year, are you more or less worried about climate change?

As the impacts of climate change become more present in people's daily lives, we asked what this means for their personal outlook.



How well are big businesses addressing climate change?

Big businesses across the world are being asked by governments, customers and civil society to think about their impact on the environment. How do people think they're doing?



How quickly should your country replace coal, oil, and gas with renewable energy, such as power from the wind or sun?

Replacing fossil fuels with clean energy is critical to limiting climate change, but energy emissions are still rising today. We asked people how quickly they want this transition to happen.



Thank you.

Vlad Bunea

4 March 2026

vladbunea.substack.com

www.sufficiencywellbeing.com

bunea@protonmail.com