

Ecological Footprint



Noteworthy:

- The Alberta ecological footprint has increased by 76% since 1961.
- Albertans are consuming at a rate more than four times that which is sustainable from a global perspective.
- If the entire world had an ecological footprint as large as the average Albertan, five planets would be required to meet consumption demands.
- Albertans' footprint of 9.0 ha/person ranks amongst the highest in the world.
- The Alberta ecological footprint is 21% larger than the average Canadian ecological footprint.
- Albertans in the top income quintile have an ecological footprint almost 50% larger than the provincial average, and 200% larger than Albertans in the lowest income quintile.

Alberta's Ecological Footprint: How Much?

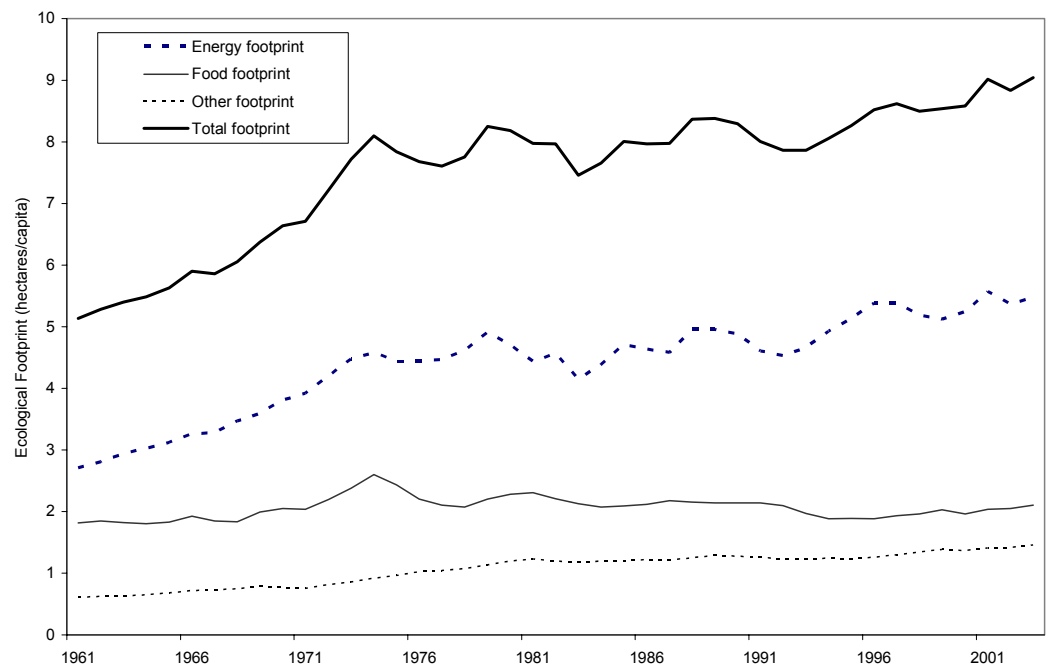
Keeping humanity's footprint within the planet's biocapacity is a minimum requirement for sustainability. The eco-footprint measures the extent to which the biosphere is overburdened by human activities. Between 1961 and 2003, Alberta's ecological footprint grew by 76% — from 5.1 hectares per person to 9.0 hectares per person. The global ecological

carrying capacity is just 1.8 hectares per person. The Alberta ecological footprint reached a new high in 2003 at 9.0 hectares per person, of which the energy footprint made up over 60%. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Alberta's ecological footprint decreased marginally due to improved energy efficiency. However, increased consumption in the

1990s has outstripped these energy efficiency gains.

Alberta's ecological footprint is forecast to reach 12 hectares per person by 2025 (see page 2). If the entire world had an ecological footprint as large as the average Albertan, five planets would be needed to meet global consumption demands.

The Alberta Ecological Footprint, 1961 to 2003



Ecological Footprint Change, 1961 to 2003:

- Energy footprint = 103%
- Food Footprint = 16%
- Other footprint = 145%
- Total footprint = 76%

So What?

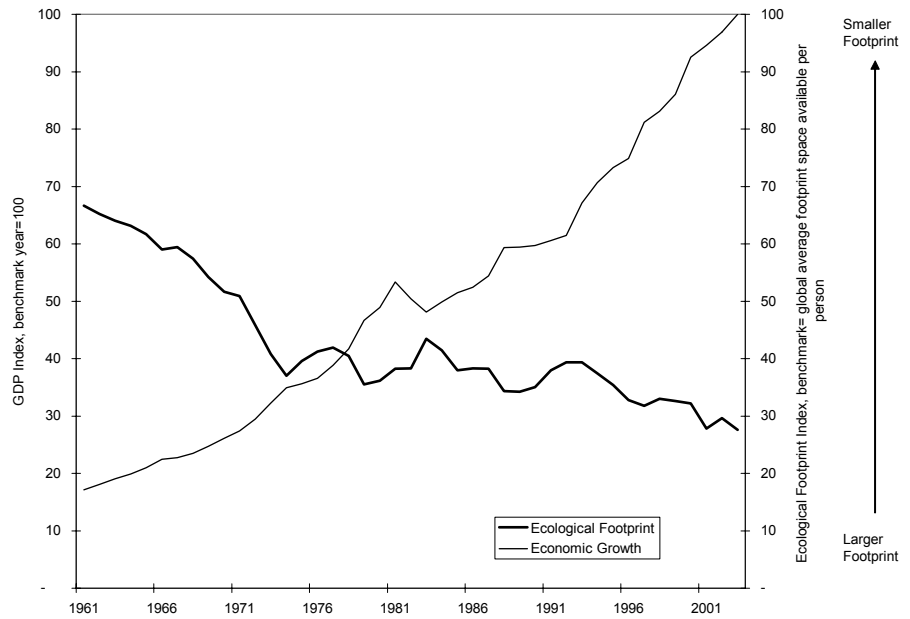
Ecological footprint analysis (EFA) empowers policy makers and citizens with information about the impacts of their consumption behaviour on ecological integrity and sustainability. EFA complements the other indicators of the GPI Account by providing a benchmark of sustainability to guide policy decisions and personal lifestyle choices that address Alberta's sustainable well-being from a global perspective.

If local gains in natural, economic or social capital come at the expense of accelerating ecological damage and social disintegration elsewhere, then local prosperity comes at a cost to global sustainability. The ecological footprint addresses the impact of our consumption, locally in Alberta by providing a more complete global picture of the consequences of our consumption habits and demands.

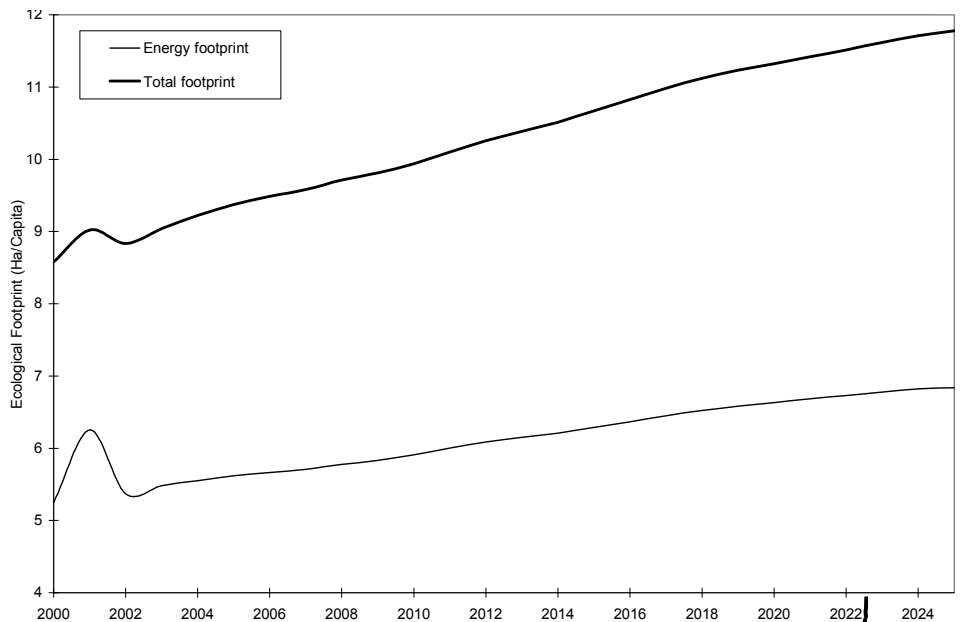
The Ecological Footprint index figure shows the ecological footprint and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Alberta as indices. In the index, an ecological footprint of 1.8 ha per person is set equal to 100, and deviations from that benchmark are measured as movement towards zero. Thus, as the ecological footprint increases relative to the benchmark of 1.8 ha per person, the index moves toward zero. While Alberta has boasted a steady increase in provincial GDP since 1961, the ecological footprint index has decreased indicating a larger Alberta ecological footprint.

EFA provides an "ecological reality check" that leads to a fundamental personal examination of "what can I do today to reduce my footprint?"

Ecological Footprint Index: Where are we today?



An Expanding Ecological Footprint, 2000 to 2025



As an index, the ecological footprint in Alberta in 2003 ranked 28 on a scale where 100 is set equal to 1.8 ha/person (see figure above).

What is the cost of an ecological footprint that exceeds global carrying capacity?