



By Molly Cruse, Earth Day Network

Fifty years ago, on April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day became the largest people's protest in history. The movement led to the formation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and initiated a wave of action including land-mark environmental laws, such as the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts, that are still in place today. But more work still needs to be done. The human population has doubled in that time, which has come at the expense of the environment and caused rising global temperatures.

The theme for Earth Day 2020 is climate action. Below are five ways you can reduce your carbon footprint today and every day.

### **1** Be a savvy consumer.

Buy sustainable products, such as those that are certified organic, made from recycled content, or produced with eco-friendly standards that are either certified by a governing body or noted by the producer. Purchase second-hand items to keep waste out of landfills.

### **2** Eat a plant-based diet.

The food system is responsible for up to a third of our global greenhouse gas emissions, of which approximately 80% are associated with livestock production. In 2019, the U.N. released a special report that stated a shift toward plant-based diets is one of the most significant ways to reduce greenhouse gases from the agricultural sector. To learn more, check out Earth Day Network's Foodprints for Future campaign at <https://earthday.org/foodprints>.

### **3** Travel smarter.

Carpooling, biking, walking, and using public transportation are great ways to reduce your carbon footprint, and are more budget-friendly than driving by yourself or as an only passenger in a car. Plan ahead by packing light, reusable items with multiple purposes to minimize fuel use and waste.

### **4** Use your voice.

Get to know your local government system and participate. Attend community town halls, join student government, speak up, and after you turn 18, vote!

### **5** Take collective action.

Think about the communities you are part of, whether it's your school, environmental club, neighborhood, faith institution, or a sports team. Together, you can start a movement. Collective action is a major influence for change and fighting the climate crisis. Additionally, consider joining Earth Challenge 2020 at <https://earthchallenge2020.earthday.org>. It's a citizen scientist movement that helps document environmental changes in your community. We can all do our part!